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ABSTRACT

The 5-year New Hampshire Statewide Systems Change Project has provided training and technical assistance to educators, families, and communities to effectively implement the full inclusion of students with disabilities in New Hampshire schools and communities. This guide was developed to disseminate successful strategies for starting the process of inclusion, meeting challenges along the way, and planning for success. Section 1 deals with practices at the school and district levels. It summarizes the benefits of inclusive education for both disabled and nondisabled students, teachers, and communities, and outlines a systems change plan that has been successfully utilized in school districts throughout New Hampshire. Section 2 deals with practices at the classroom and individual student levels. It provides examples of transitioning students from separate, special education placements into typical age-appropriate classes in the neighborhood school; offers general guidelines on making inclusion work in the classroom; outlines a process for modifying the regular curriculum so that all students are active participants in classroom activities; describes ways of expanding classroom routines to create opportunities for students to learn skills not typically addressed in the regular curriculum; and suggests ways of providing unique student supports in regular education settings. An appendix lists 33 suggested resources. (DB)

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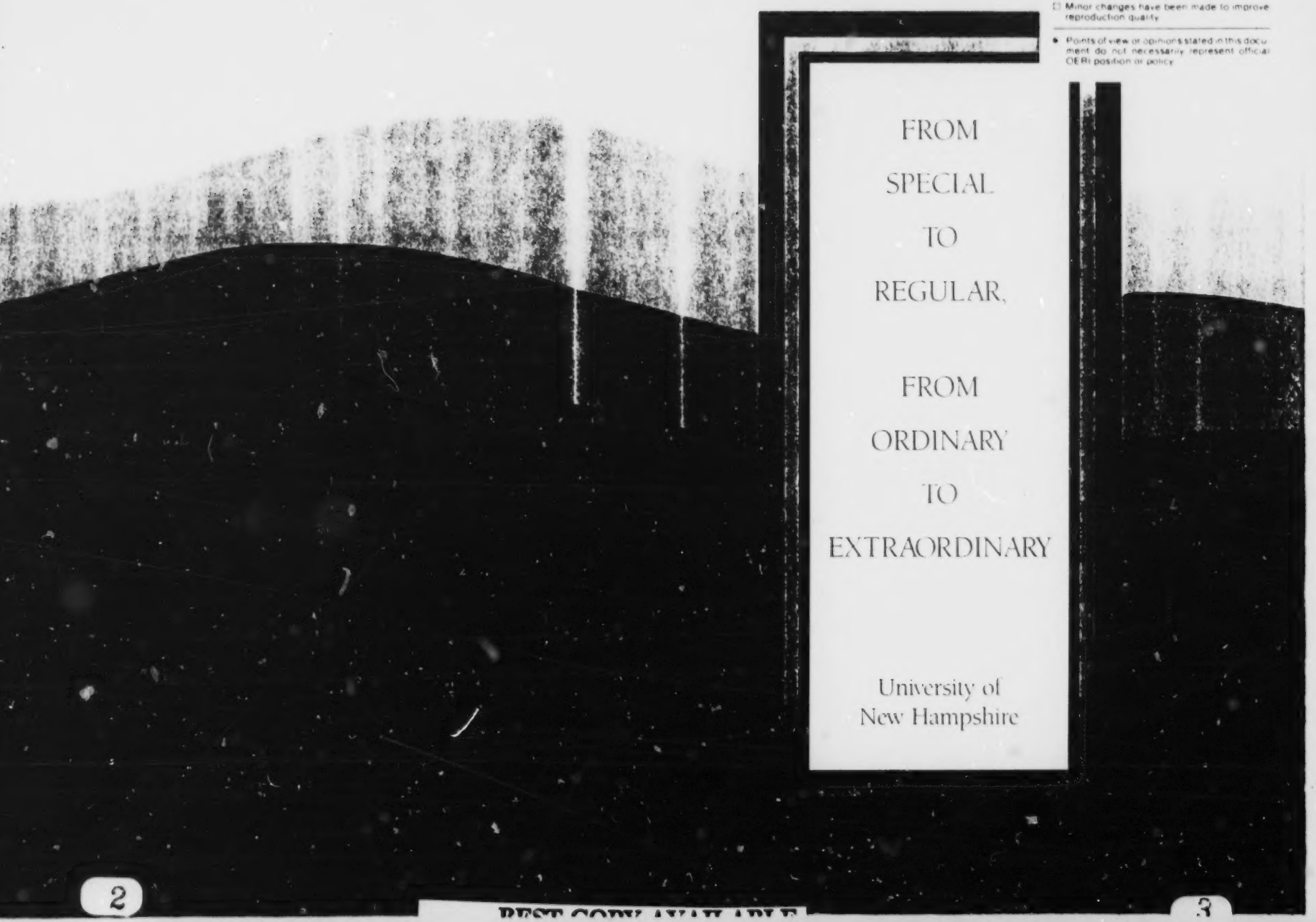

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Once upon a time
a man whose ax was missing
suspected his neighbor's son.

The boy walked like a thief,
looked like a thief, and
spoke like a thief.

But the man found his ax
while digging in the valley,
and the next time
he saw his neighbor's son,
the boy walked, looked, and
spoke like any other child.

Lao-tzu

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Introduction

In schools throughout the country, inclusive education is becoming a reality. Students, parents, teachers, and communities are recognizing the benefits to all when every student is respected and valued as a learner and an equal participant. Schools and communities are growing stronger as they celebrate the diversity of all students.

Educators and families in New Hampshire are a part of this exciting change. In 1988, the Institute on Disability, in conjunction with the New Hampshire Department of Education, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education designed to increase the capacity of New Hampshire schools to include students with severe disabilities in regular education classes and neighborhood schools. For five years, the statewide Systems Change Project provided training and technical assistance to educators, families, and communities to change inclusion from a well-intentioned philosophy to a well-affirmed practice. In that short time, New Hampshire schools and communities have recognized the benefits of inclusive education and have developed strategies to achieve inclusion in towns and cities throughout the state.

Much has been learned in these five years. Families and educators — many involved in schools with long histories of separate systems of education for students with disabilities — began questioning the status quo of special education. Together they worked tirelessly to revamp entire educational systems and achieve full inclusion for all students. And although their efforts began with the quest for quality education for students with disabilities, they soon discovered the principles of school restructuring and reform and quickly expanded their focus to include educational equity and excellence for everyone.

From Special to Regular, From Ordinary to Extraordinary has been written based upon information, strategies, and stories from New Hampshire educators, parents, and students. This book has been created to further inspire and support the efforts of professionals and families who are working to include students with disabilities in regular education classes — from preschool through post-secondary education. Woven throughout the six chapters are strategies for starting the process of inclusion, meeting challenges along the way, and planning for success. In New Hampshire, we have learned that every success begins with a commitment to an ideal, and ends with a belief that anything is possible when people work together. For schools just beginning the process of including all students, as well as for those who are well underway, we hope this book provides useful information and inspiration for moving *From Special to Regular, From Ordinary To Extraordinary*.

Section One
SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PRACTICES

Chapter 1:
Understanding the Benefits of Inclusive Education

Chapter 2:
Achieving Systems Change

Chapter One

UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education benefits not only students with disabilities, but provides a variety of benefits for students without disabilities, teachers, schools, and communities.

Public schools throughout the country are opening their doors to students with disabilities and including them as fully accepted and participating members of the school community. The impetus for this change has come from many sources. Parents and advocates have urged schools to allow individual students free and full access to typical educational experiences, and schools have responded positively. School philosophies and policies that encourage inclusive education have evolved through an increased public focus on the rights of people with disabilities, and a growing commitment to educate all students in their neighborhood schools. Change has also happened as a result of the educational research that encourages schools to focus not on students' labels, but instead on the diverse characteristics that make each student a unique learner. Inclusive education benefits not only students with disabilities, but provides a variety of benefits for students without disabilities, teachers, schools, and communities. This chapter provides a summary of the ways in which inclusive education benefits everyone.

Friendship

"I used to go home and watch t.v. after school. Now I play soccer with friends from my class." — Fifth grade student

"For years my daughter had objectives on her IEP to teach her how to become more social. Now that she is in 8th grade classes all day, her friends have taught her how to be a regular teenager." — Mother of a 13 year old

"We had been living on Maple Street for many years when our daughter Erika began attending our neighborhood school. When a classmate called to invite Erika to a party, I was shocked to find out that the girl lived right down the street from us. We had lived here all of these years and the girls had never met before." — Father of a 9 year old

Friendship is one of the staples of life. Having friends, doing things with people you care about, and having opportunities to meet and make new friends are important ingredients of a meaningful life. For many people with disabilities, having a real friend is too often only a dream. When people with disabilities are kept apart from society — educated in separate classrooms or schools, employed in sheltered workshops, engaged in separate leisure activities — there are few opportunities for friendships to develop.

The opportunity to develop friendships is one of the most tangible benefits of including students with disabilities in all aspects of the classroom and the school community. When students learn side by side, when every student's contribution to the class is valued, when peers

are encouraged to offer each other support and encouragement, students with and without disabilities are able to develop meaningful relationships. Real friendships can happen only when all students share common spaces and experiences.

The development of friendships among students with and without disabilities can be nurtured when students participate together in class and school activities. It is important that the student with disabilities be viewed by classmates and teachers as a *true* member of the regular education class. If this student spends some, but not all, of the day in the regular education class (with the remainder of his or her time in special education settings or separate community-based instruction), it is likely that he or she will be viewed by peers simply as a visitor *to*, not a member *of*, the class community. When this occurs, it is less likely that equitable relationships will develop.

Through their day-to-day practices and beliefs, educators and administrators in inclusive schools can promote the development of friendships among students. Schools that clearly value the unique abilities and contributions of all students — through heterogeneous classes, diversity celebrations, cooperative learning groups, and people-first language — actively promote students' appreciation of the similarities and differences in themselves and others. This appreciation can easily develop into genuine caring — not simply benevolence — among students, and real friendships are more likely to develop.

The development of friendships may initially require structured opportunities and facilitation for students who enter regular education classes late in their educational careers. For students who begin their education as full members of regular education classes, this intervention or support may not be necessary.

Peer models for learning

"When I don't know, I look at the other kids." — 15 year old girl

"When he first came into my classroom, he acted like a much younger child. Even the other students noticed this. But now I see him trying hard to follow the lead of his classmates, and he is quickly learning how to be a fourth grader." — Fourth grade teacher

"Andrew frustrated many specialists who tried for years to teach him how to hold a pencil correctly. When he was in second grade, he watched his classmates using crayons and pencils. Next thing we knew, he turned his pencil around and began to use it just like everyone else. He had learned to do it because he had such good role models all around him." — Mother of a 10 year old

Learning from the people around us is a common way of gaining information and developing new skills. Young children in play groups and preschools learn new words and problem-solving skills from one another. Children in elementary school classes learn the newest games and the latest jokes. Adolescents turn to their peers to determine what clothes are "in" and to learn what's "cool" in music. Even adults watch their dinner partners to determine which fork to use with which course. The old sayings "when in doubt, look about" or "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" apply as much to children and teens as they do to adults.

When students with disabilities are separated from their typical peers, they are denied the basic opportunity that is provided to all other students — the opportunity to learn what is expected of someone their age. A special education teacher, no matter how skilled or experienced, cannot teach a 14 year old student how to be a teenager. A physical therapist cannot teach a student the latest dance steps. A speech pathologist cannot teach a student the latest slang. These are things that can be learned only when students interact with others their own age.

By including students with disabilities in regular education, all students are afforded the opportunity to benefit from peer models. By working together, students observe the ways in which other students are successful and model these behaviors. A student who has difficulty communicating can learn effective strategies by being with students who use language all day long. A student who needs to learn to stay on task can be surrounded by other students working diligently at their lessons. A student with goals in reading can work side by side with other readers. At times, all students may find their best teachers among their peers.

The goal is to teach students how to be successful in the real world, not in the world of special education.

Some educators continue to deny the fundamental importance of peer modeling. Instead, they identify skills such as staying on task or being able to communicate, as criteria for inclusion into regular education. These educators put students in a catch-22 — students *need their peers to learn* but are kept out of the mainstream until they have *learned to be with their peers.*

Learning real skills in real places

"When I was a self-contained, special education teacher I brought large dolls into my classroom for use during circle time activities. I used these dolls to teach my students how to initiate conversations. I now know that all I really did was teach my students how to say 'good morning' to puppets." — Inclusion facilitator

"I went to an IEP meeting a few years back where a physical therapist explained how she had been teaching my daughter to climb stairs. When I asked her how I could carry this over at home, she told me that my daughter was practicing on 'therapy stairs,' and we would have to wait until she gained specific skills before moving on to 'real' stairs. My daughter was 15 years old at the time." — Mother of an 18 year old

"As a tenth grader, Ray took classes in the morning and then left school to work at a job in the community in the afternoon. I finally spoke to the team about having Ray work an after-school job like all other kids, so that he could get work experience without missing any classes." — High school principal

One of the primary goals of the educational system is to prepare students to successfully enter the world of adulthood. Educators hope their graduates will become productive workers, responsible citizens, and good neighbors. To this end, schools provide students with a balanced curriculum, one that teaches skills and enhances cultural understanding. For students with disabilities, the goals of education should be no different. To prepare students with disabilities for life beyond school, they must be taught valuable skills and obtain knowledge through meaningful learning experiences. The goal is to teach students how to be successful in the real world, not in the world of special education. Self-contained special education classrooms can only teach students to live in self-contained environments. To learn how to live in the "regular" world, students must be taught in regular educational settings.

One of the benefits of educating students with disabilities within the regular education system is that students are taught in real, not contrived, environments. For example, learning language and communication skills alongside typical peers teaches students with disabilities to communicate successfully in the real world. Mobility skills can be addressed while students change classes or come into the school building after recess. Students can be taught independent

living skills, such as dressing, personal care, and using the bathroom, during everyday school events — changing for Physical Education, using the school restrooms, and preparing for Art class. Academic skills, of course, are taught and used during academic classes. When fully included in regular education classes, students are able to develop valuable and useful skills.

Learning real skills in real places means that educators take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to teach these skills. Educators and related service personnel identify regular classroom, school, and after-school situations in which skills can be taught. This is in stark contrast to the "pull-out" model of services in which students with disabilities were removed from natural environments, and learning occurred in artificially created situations.

Just as learning real skills in real places does not mean that students are "pulled out" of the regular classroom, neither does it mean that students leave the school building during the school day to participate in separate community-based instruction. When truly included, students with disabilities are educated all day in regular education classes alongside typical peers. Leaving school to participate in separate community-based instruction runs counter to this value. Students with disabilities become physically separated — and potentially socially isolated — when they are no longer participating full time with peers in school.

Instead of traditional community-based instruction, meaningful skills can be taught in a variety of ways in typical activities and settings. Skills once thought to be learned only in the community, can indeed be learned in the school building and in regular education classes. For example, purchasing skills can be learned while shopping in the school store, cooking skills can be taught during a Home Economics class, and leisure skills can be developed in Physical Education classes and extracurricular clubs. Students also can be supported in the community with their peers after-school, on weekends, and throughout the summer. Work experience can be obtained during these times as well. Summer school that includes natural community and recreational inclusion can meet many of a student's community-based goals. When regular education curriculum changes to include mentorships, internships, and community learning for all students, students with and without disabilities will gain valuable skills and experiences together. Until that time, pulling students with disabilities out of regular classes to participate in community-based instruction only perpetuates a separate system of education.

Students can also be given intensive support and instruction in community living and work experience after the completion of their senior year of high school. Many students with significant disabilities remain supported by their school districts beyond the age of 18 (in New Hampshire, to age 21 or upon receipt of a standard diploma). The years following a student's senior year in high school can be spent developing connections and skills in the local community — in the same places and at the same time as peers — with support as needed.

Acquiring knowledge and developing personal interests

"I hope schools are not in the business of simply producing worker bees." — New Hampshire policy planner

"Bryan studied the Revolutionary War in fifth grade. When our family took a trip to Boston, Bryan enlightened all of us with the information he had learned in school." — Mother of a 12 year old

"After taking the ninth grade Natural Science course, Sarah discovered a love of science. This summer she got a job as the assistant to the naturalist in a local summer camp." — Father of a 15 year old

Schools provide students with opportunities to learn a diverse number of subjects. Throughout their secondary school careers, students enroll in core curriculum classes and supplement these classes by selecting additional coursework in areas such as science, fine arts, and foreign language. These electives not only add richness to education, but assist students in making informed choices about their futures. Opportunities to expand knowledge and interests beyond formally offered courses are available through field trips, extracurricular clubs, assemblies, and guest speakers.

When students participate in common classes, they share experiences and develop similar interests, both essential ingredients to forming relationships.

When students with disabilities are educated in special education classes, their curriculum is often less varied than that in the regular classroom. Typically, special education classes focus more on "functional skills" and less on subjects such as science, fine arts, literature, and social studies. Students who attend these special education classes are less likely to receive the rich and varied experiences that regular education has to offer.

A significant benefit of inclusive education is providing students with disabilities the same opportunities to expand their knowledge and interests as students without disabilities. As full-time members of regular education classes, students with disabilities can take a combination of core classes and electives. Both types of classes provide opportunities to learn specific skills, gain knowledge, and develop personal interests. When students participate in common classes, they share experiences and develop similar interests, both essential ingredients to forming relationships. A rich and varied education benefits students of all abilities by providing them with the information and experience they need to make informed choices about their use of free time, their continuing education, and their career.

Acceptance of differences

"When my son Bob got invited to his first birthday party, I called the child's mother to arrange for him to attend. As I started talking about portable ramps and bathroom size, I realized this mother didn't know what I was talking about. She didn't know Bob used a wheelchair! Her son had just said he wanted to invite 'some friends' from his class to the party." — Mother of a 10 year old

"I like Justin because he's my friend." — Second grade student speaking of his classmate with disabilities

"My eyes were really opened last year. I now believe that we must teach all children to celebrate the diversity in our world." — Ninth grade teacher who had a student with disabilities in her class

Throughout history, people with disabilities have been removed from their communities and kept apart from the general population. Placing people with disabilities in institutions, hospitals, segregated schools, and sheltered workshops denies them the opportunities available to others in the community. Consequently, most people without disabilities have not had the chance to know people with disabilities. The segregation of people with disabilities, and the lack of opportunities for routine and natural interactions, has allowed society to develop myths, fears, and prejudices about those who are perceived as different. Despite changes in law and public policy, many people continue to have little interaction with children or adults with disabilities.

Including all students in regular education classes in neighborhood schools affords students

and teachers opportunities to meet, interact with, and develop relationships with students of varying abilities and disabilities. Students and teachers get to know one another as individuals, not simply on the basis of labels or disabilities. Teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes are challenged to develop teaching strategies that encourage students to respect the accomplishments of all classmates and to value the strengths and abilities of peers. These teaching strategies can benefit all students as they learn to appreciate the similarities and differences among all people.

Students who attend inclusive schools today will become the teachers, school board members, employers, legislators, and parents of tomorrow. These students will grow into adulthood having had experiences with peers who moved, communicated, ate, and learned in a variety of ways. As adults, they will be far less likely to accept the old myths and prejudices about people with disabilities. Based upon their knowledge, experience, and acceptance of differences, they will be able to view all people equally.

Professionals and paraprofessionals working together

"My Two Crazy Teachers" — The title of a short story by a third grade student about her teacher and the classroom assistant.

"At first parents were concerned their children would receive less attention from the teacher when a student with disabilities joined the class. Now parents are requesting that their children be with that child next year because of how much they learned this year." — Elementary school principal.

"Room 4B. Ms. Dawson and Ms. Greely" — Sign on the door of a fourth grade classroom.

"At first, whenever the occupational therapist came into my room, she worked with just Suzanne. Now she works with different groups of children during writing lessons to help all of them with their penmanship." — Third grade teacher.

Teaching can be a lonely profession. Teachers — responsible for all aspects of their students' learning — may feel as if there is no one to turn to for guidance, assistance, or collaboration. When a student with disabilities enters a regular classroom, he or she usually comes with a team of people willing and able to work with and support the classroom teacher. For example, special educators — often called inclusion facilitators, support teachers, or resource teachers — are available to join forces with the classroom teacher to modify curriculum and materials, and to develop strategies for a student or students in the classroom. (Readers can refer to *Changes in Latitudes, Change in Attitudes*, Institute on Disability/UAP, 1993, for more information on the role of the inclusion facilitator.) Related service personnel, such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and vision specialists can spend time in the classroom assisting the student to participate in classroom activities. They can also consult with classroom teachers on ways to increase a student's participation during class lessons. Additionally, paraprofessional personnel, such as teaching assistants, can be assigned to classrooms to offer support to teachers and students alike.

Additional professional personnel in the classroom benefit not only the student with disabilities, but the other students and teachers as well. Teachers may informally refer a student having trouble to one of these professionals and learn new ways to support the student in the classroom without having the student labeled and potentially stigmatized. Collaboration between the classroom teacher and support professionals encourages team teaching. Related service professionals and special educators can teach class lessons on a regularly scheduled basis to provide the classroom teacher with additional planning periods. Special educators can bring skills and resources into the classroom that will enhance the education of all students.

A paraprofessional, or teaching assistant, assigned to support the education of a student with disabilities, benefits all students and teachers by offering the teacher help in the classroom. An assistant can teach small groups of students, free the teacher for professional obligations, and help prepare lessons and materials. The paraprofessional may be assigned to a particular classroom because of the inclusion of a student with disabilities, but his or her skills and presence can assist the classroom teacher in maximizing the educational experiences of all students. It is important that the assistant be assigned to the class and *not* to an individual student. Linking an assistant with a student can be a barrier to full inclusion.

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For a new high school graduate, success may be entrance into college or a job of choice, having a place to live, and being surrounded by friends and loved ones. For a new high school graduate with disabilities, success should be defined in exactly the same way.

Shared resources

"Michael uses a computer to do some of his written work. The great thing is, now all of my students have two computers in the classroom to use!" — Fifth grade teacher

"The district used to pay tens of thousands of dollars to send three children to out-of-district schools. Now that these children are back in district, that money can be used to bring materials and personnel into our neighborhood school. Instead of just three students benefiting, now all students and teachers benefit." — Special education director

A common concern when discussing inclusive education is finances. Can school districts really afford to provide teachers and students with the supports necessary to be successful? Answering that question is less a matter of dollars and cents and more an issue of how school districts allocate resources.

Sending a student with disabilities out-of-district to be educated is a costly proposition for school districts. While individual situations vary, costs to the school district may include high tuition rates, related services, teaching assistants, and transportation. When money is sent out of the community to buy services, the local district retains little or no control over how it is spent. In contrast, inclusive education allows money formerly spent out of the community to be used locally to fund supports for students, teachers, and schools. When resources remain in neighborhood schools to support students in regular classrooms (teaching assistants, professionals in the classroom, technology, and materials), the entire school and community benefit. Shifting money from out-of-district placements means these funds can be used to provide quality inclusive education for all of the district's students. Although a reduction in costs may be a desired outcome for some communities, the values of full participation and inclusion remain the priority.

Successful outcomes

"I got a job!" — 19 year old high school graduate

"What is the best way to insure that adults with disabilities get jobs in the community? Make sure they go to school with their peers in the community." — New Hampshire policy maker

"I feel as if my son spent 18 years in kindergarten. His time in special education classes and schools didn't teach him what he needed to know to succeed in the community. In fact when he graduated, he returned to a town where no one even knew him." — Father of a 35 year old

There are many definitions of success. For most people, being successful equates to being able to do what you want, where you want, and with whom you want. For a new high school graduate, success may be entrance into college or a job of choice, having a place to live, and being surrounded by friends and loved ones. For a new high school graduate with disabilities, success should be defined in exactly the same way.

When a student with disabilities is educated somewhere other than regular education classes in the neighborhood school, it is likely that he or she will graduate from school into a community where he or she is not well known. Riding a bus to a school in a distant town, or even spending time in classes out of the mainstream, separates an individual from the people in the community with whom connections would otherwise be made. Upon graduation, relationships that did not form throughout the school years will be much harder to develop. When a job is sought, employers and community members who never had the opportunity to get to know the student may be unaware of his or her abilities, interests, and personality. This can result in fewer opportunities for employment, community supports, and housing. Had that student spent all of his or her school years in regular education classes in his or her neighborhood school, relationships could have naturally developed throughout the years and the student would be known throughout the community. Graduation could then be a typical rite of passage into successful adult life.

Including all students in regular education classrooms and schools provides them equal opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and relationships that will assist them in pursuing their dreams after high school. Educating all students together insures that everyone will be better prepared to face the challenges of a diverse and changing society.

Chapter Two

ACHIEVING SYSTEMS CHANGE

A systems change plan to facilitate full inclusion in a school or school district must grow from a belief in the value of full participation and belonging for all students in a school and all people in a community.

The transition of even one student with severe disabilities into a regular education class in his or her neighborhood school has implications for the school and school district as a whole. As teachers, parents, and students recognize the benefits of inclusive education, school administrators and communities must begin to evaluate existing educational policy and develop systems change strategies that support full participation for all students. Traditional models of special education — staff and curriculum development, student transportation, and parent involvement — are challenged as students with disabilities enter regular education classes in their neighborhood schools.

This chapter provides an outline of a systems change plan that has been successfully utilized in school districts throughout New Hampshire. A systems change plan to facilitate full inclusion in a school or school district must grow from a belief in the value of full participation and belonging for all students in a school and all people in a community. This belief must be demonstrated and supported as students with disabilities transition into regular education classes and neighborhood schools, and classroom strategies are employed to allow all students to participate and learn within the regular curriculum.

Readers are encouraged to use the basic components of this plan as a guideline for developing a systems change strategy that best fits their school district's unique needs. The four essential components are:

- creation of an Inclusion Leadership Team
- provision of training opportunities
- development of appropriate supports
- rethinking of regular education.

As with any change process, it is important to know "where you are" before planning for "where you want to be." For this reason, Chart 1, entitled, *The Systems Change Priority Checklist*, has been developed to assist teams in determining the areas of need in their district and in developing an action plan for change. The checklist is designed so that every "yes" answer indicates a best practice, and every "no" answer indicates an area of need.

Chart 1
The Systems Change Priority Checklist

1. Do all students attend the school and classes they would attend if they did not have disabilities (NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL)?
2. Do all students attend regular education classes appropriate to their CHRONOLOGICAL AGE?
3. Do students with disabilities attend regular education classes on a FULL TIME basis (receive all support services in the classroom, follow the same schedule as other students, etc.)?
4. Do regular education classes have a NATURAL PROPORTION of students with and without disabilities (approximately 10-15% of students in the class receive special education support)?
5. Do students with disabilities use the same PLACES AND SERVICES as other students (regular transportation, cafeteria, bathrooms, etc.)?
6. Do students with disabilities receive the SUPPORTS they need to be successful in the classroom (curriculum modification, assistive technology, adult and peer assistance, etc.)?
7. Is TRAINING provided to professionals, paraprofessionals, families, and community members, on topics relevant to inclusive education and best education practices for all students?
8. Do teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms receive the SUPPORTS necessary for them to successfully teach all students in their classes (planning time, consultation and collaboration with specialists, classroom support, information on innovative teaching strategies, etc.)?
9. Are PARENTS of students with disabilities given every opportunity to be full participants in their child's education?
10. Do students with disabilities participate as MEMBERS OF THEIR OWN TEAMS and assume leadership on the team as they grow older?
11. Does the school district have a PHILOSOPHY that respects all students as learners and contributing members of the classroom and school community?
12. Are support and placement decisions made INDEPENDENT OF FINANCES?
13. Does the school district have a LEADERSHIP TEAM to address the issues indicated by "no" answers on this checklist?

Gerry Coswell, superintendent of schools, is dissatisfied with the way in which education is provided to students with disabilities in his district. Throughout his tenure, he has seen too many students with disabilities sent out-of-district and far too few returned home. His colleagues in neighboring towns have expressed to him the tremendous benefits — to students and to schools — of inclusive education. Gerry feels that it is time for his district to educate all students in regular classrooms and neighborhood schools.

Gerry knows that a leader can set the vision for change, but for change to really take hold, everyone must be involved in the process. Gerry feels that it would be beneficial to form an inclusion committee and he immediately enlists the support of key people in the school and community. He invites three teachers, two principals, three parents, a school board member, a community member who has disabilities, and two members of the student council to join the committee. Together they begin the process of systems change.

Systemic change requires leadership. The support of a leader(s) who is not only committed to the process of change but also to the values of that change, is extremely important in the development of inclusive schools. The formation of an Inclusion Leadership Team can assist a school district in establishing the motivation as well as the priority activities for change.

"... the district believes that schools should provide a learning environment that will meet the needs of all students, and the primary placement of the student should be in a regular classroom appropriate to the child's chronological age group."
Philosophy statement, Concord School District, Concord, NH

To be most effective, an Inclusion Leadership Team should have broad representation to allow all constituencies a voice in planning and implementation, and to facilitate greater acceptance of goals and actions. Membership can include, but not be limited to, parents, teachers, students, administrators, and community members. It is essential that this team include established leaders from the school and general community. Leaders — such as superintendents, business leaders, people with disabilities, school board chairs, PTO presidents, student council presidents, school administrators, and lead teachers — give strength and credibility to the team, and can assist in providing the administrative and monetary support to achieve positive outcomes.

The Inclusion Leadership Team should be closely aligned with any existing school improvement task force. Convening as a subcommittee of such a task force ensures that issues related to inclusion become a focus of all school improvement dialogue. If a school district does not have such a task force, the Inclusion Leadership Team can recommend that one be developed.

The Inclusion Leadership Team should meet often enough to keep abreast of school and community changes and should be charged with generating a list of priority goals related to inclusion. School and community needs assessments may be conducted to ensure that meaningful goals are addressed. The following are common goals identified by New Hampshire Inclusion Leadership Teams:

- development of a written philosophy of inclusive education
- provision of training opportunities for parents, faculty, community members, and students
- transition of students into neighborhood schools and regular classrooms (see Chapter 3)
- evaluation and reassignment of staff roles and responsibilities
- general review of curriculum and teaching strategies
- involvement of the general community in the school community.

The inclusion committee begins by determining its mission and its goals. Gerry makes it quite clear that the mission is to achieve full inclusion in the district as quickly as possible. To support committee members in developing or strengthening their commitment to this mission, Gerry suggests materials to read, schools to visit, and people with whom to speak. The team asks the superintendent for information on the existing structures in the district (number of students out-of-district or in self-contained classes, special education staffing patterns, and school philosophy and practices) and upon review realizes that significant changes must be made in each area. The group breaks into sub-committees to explore each issue and develop action plans for change.

Once an Inclusion Leadership Team identifies its goals, a schedule of activities designed to achieve these goals, along with persons responsible for each, is essential. The Inclusion Leadership Team must be viewed as an action-oriented body with specific activities and outcomes. A mechanism for easy and reliable communication must be developed to facilitate continued support and confidence among the leadership team, the school, and the community. Common strategies for achieving good communication include frequent reporting at faculty and school board meetings, rotating "ad hoc" membership, and the timely dissemination of minutes. Individual schools may form sub-committees of the leadership team to effectively address school-specific issues and activities. In summary, the Inclusion Leadership Team is responsible for setting district goals, determining necessary steps to achieve these goals, and taking action to ensure these steps are taken.

The inclusion committee quickly realizes that, in order to establish both the commitment and the skills for inclusion, the district has to provide comprehensive training to all school staff and community members. Gerry and the building principals agree to build workshop and early release days into the calendar and to budget money for conference and speaker fees, and classroom substitute teachers. In return, the committee will recommend topics and possible presenters.

The committee feels strongly that school staff must be provided with information on the benefits of inclusion from many different perspectives. One of the members suggests that a group of parents whose children are included in other schools present on the family's perspective of inclusion. Another member recommends that classroom teachers involved in inclusion also share their experiences and views. Gerry interrupts this discussion to suggest that all of these trainings be open to family and community members as well as school staff. He feels that it is important that everyone be given the same information. The committee agrees that invitations to all trainings will be sent to school staff, families, and community members.

While training on the benefits of inclusion is high on the priority list for the committee, they also know that training on the "how to's" of inclusion is important. The committee recommends that training be done in the district on the topics of "Classroom Strategies" and "Curriculum Modification" but that teachers also be given ample opportunity and support to attend statewide trainings on topics of interest.

The committee has gotten off to a good start, but knows that in order to be effective, training must be ongoing. A follow-up needs assessment will be done in each school, and after each training, so that the committee can keep abreast of the district's training needs.

As the Inclusion Leadership Team sets goals and develops action plans, it is important that school and community members have ongoing opportunities to attend trainings and workshops about inclusive education. Providing comprehensive training and education to school personnel, parents, students, and community members is an essential ingredient in any systems change plan. Successful training plans include opportunities for participants to develop a greater understanding of and commitment to inclusive education, as well as increased skill in achieving inclusive classrooms, schools, and communities. To provide all audiences with a general awareness of inclusive education, training which targets the benefits of inclusion should be available to all school personnel (via faculty meetings), as well as parents and community members (via evening or weekend forums). Parents of students with and without disabilities should be encouraged to attend school-sponsored trainings. Typical parent-school organizations can sponsor workshops, presentations, and support networks that are available to all parents in the school.

"... we believe that if your child is working as hard as he or she can and turning in his or her best possible work, he or she should receive an A. How else do we encourage children to move ahead with confidence and the assurance that hard work produces good grades? In order to get an A, you need not be doing the best in your class, but rather doing your own personal best."
Grading policy, Swasey Elementary School, Brentwood, NH.

Educating students on the issues of acceptance of diversity and inclusion must occur in natural ways. Traditional "handicap awareness" activities should be avoided. Such activities tend to focus primarily on the *disability* rather than the *person who happens to have a disability*, and often speak of people with disabilities as a homogeneous group. Students ideally gain this education naturally, by having students with disabilities in their classes and by learning to value everyone's contributions.

Schools and community members can learn about the benefits of inclusive education in many ways. Parents of children with disabilities can be extremely effective teachers on the value of accepting and including all members of the community. An individual who experiences a disability can present on the issues of segregation and inclusion. A slide presentation or video showing students with disabilities who are successfully included in their home schools and age-appropriate classes are valuable teaching tools. Encouraging visits to inclusive schools is a proven means of demonstrating the values of inclusion. Local and national speakers are available to increase school and community members' understanding of the inequities of the past and the potential of the future.

It is important to provide school personnel not only with information about the benefits of inclusion, but also with training opportunities designed to increase their abilities to educate students with diverse abilities in their classrooms. Educators, related service personnel, and paraprofessionals can benefit from trainings on curriculum modification strategies, augmentative communication, learning opportunities in the regular classroom, cooperative learning, and collaborative consultation, as well as other trainings of their choosing. Education in these areas can be achieved through workshops by local and national experts, as well as through peer training (e.g., mentorships, visits to inclusive schools, local teachers conducting workshops). In addition, discipline-specific trainings, on topics such as the role of the paraprofessional, the role of the inclusion facilitator, and the related service provider in the regular education classroom, are recommended. Leadership training for administrators and members of the Inclusion Leadership Team is also valuable. (Refer to the Appendix for a list of useful training materials.)

Developing an Inclusion Leadership Team, adopting a philosophy, and providing comprehensive training to all involved are essential ingredients of any systems change plan. However, it is equally important for such a plan to include the ways in which support will be provided to students, families, teachers, and schools. If inclusive education is to be defined as "all students educated in age-appropriate regular education classes in their neighborhood schools *and supports provided to students, teachers, and classes so that all can be successful*," then providing the appropriate support is key.

Supports for students, families, teachers, and schools must be individualized, based upon the specifics of each situation. The supports that are necessary when a student is in third grade may be very different from the supports that are required when that student enters eighth grade. Supports will vary based upon the needs of the student, the teacher, the classroom, and even the school. Chapters 3 – 6 discuss in detail the ways in which teams determine appropriate supports and modifications for *individual* students. This chapter outlines the *systems* support issues that assist school districts in being able to meet the unique needs of students, parents, and teachers.

When developing a systems change plan, a school district must define a strategy for identifying and providing necessary supports. What follows is a brief description of the variety of supports that school districts in New Hampshire have identified as valuable. It is important for the reader to recognize this as a list of suggestions and not a menu of options. It may also be valuable for the reader to note that many Inclusion Leadership Teams use this list of supports to evaluate their school district's stated policy and practice. The following types of support will be addressed:

- parent involvement
- the changing roles of educators
- classroom assistants
- related services during typical routines
- scheduled team planning time
- assistive technology
- friendship as an educational issue

Parent involvement

Parents must be recognized as full and equal members of their child's educational team. Teachers, assistants, and principals may change over time — only parents have the perspective of knowing their child's past, present, and future dreams. As a school district begins to provide quality inclusive education for all students, it must evaluate the ways in which parents participate in the school, class, and team process, and develop strategies to encourage their participation to the fullest extent.

Welcoming parents' involvement in their children's education may require many changes in current practices. Addressing parental and student priorities in the IEP process may represent a change in the school district's present IEP policy. Including parents and students on Inclusion Leadership Teams and other policy forums may require a change in the way in which a school district makes decisions. Encouraging all parents to become members of school-wide parent organizations can provide opportunities for parents of children with and without disabilities to develop common visions and goals. Opening classroom doors to all parents can support both parents and teachers in achieving their desired outcomes for all students.

Changing roles of educators

Developing an inclusive school district necessitates a major change in the way all educators view their roles. Classroom teachers who were accustomed to being the lone adult in their classrooms may find that other professionals and/or paraprofessionals have become a part of their classroom structure. Special education teachers who had small classes of students with disabilities will find their classrooms gone and their skills now used to support not only students, but classroom teachers as well. Educators who were autonomous in their classrooms will find that collaboration with one or more colleagues is the key to success.

All educators will need to be supported to view their roles in different ways, but the development of a new professional role is also essential. This role — commonly referred to as an inclusion facilitator — replaces the old role of resource room teacher or self-contained special educator. The person in this role has the responsibility of providing support to the

"... it is agreed that the primary educational environment for all students is in a regular class within the neighborhood school. Students are provided a continuum of supports to maximize educational success in age appropriate classes."
Guidelines for Inclusion: Pelham and Windham School Districts

classroom teacher so that he or she can best educate all students in the class. This support may include assisting with curriculum modification strategies, co-teaching, and accessing equipment and/or technological support. The classroom teacher therefore becomes the primary educator for all of the students in the classroom and relies on the inclusion facilitator and others to provide the supports necessary for success. (See Chart 2 for a sample job description for an inclusion facilitator.)

Classroom assistants

A common and valuable support for teachers in a fully inclusive school is the use of classroom assistants. A classroom teacher may require the availability of another adult in the classroom, part-time or full-time, to allow him or her to successfully teach all students. The role of the classroom assistant must be clear. While the need for the assistant may arise from the membership of a student with disabilities in the class, the role of this individual is to provide support

Chart 2
Job Description — Inclusion Facilitator

This individual is responsible for providing and coordinating supports to classroom teachers and students in regular education classrooms in order to facilitate learning and full inclusion.

Responsibilities:

- Serve as support coordinator for students in regular education classrooms.
- Act as a facilitator in student-specific team meetings.
- Participate in the development of IEPs for students.
- Collaborate with classroom teachers and assistants in the development, implementation, and monitoring of curriculum modification strategies and supports.
- Schedule time in each student's class and with each classroom teacher to provide support and consultation.
- Collaborate with team members on monitoring each student's progress.
- Meet regularly with building and district administrators to keep current on guidelines and standards.
- Facilitate the transition of students from grade-to-grade, school-to-school, and school to post-secondary experiences.
- Act as a resource to school personnel, families, students, and the school board on issues related to inclusion.

to the teacher and to all students in the classroom. The classroom assistant must take his or her lead from the classroom teacher and may have such varied responsibilities as teaching a reading group, assisting a student with a lesson, and grading papers. As part of a systems change plan, the school district must develop job descriptions for classroom assistants that respect the true objective of this role — to provide additional support to classroom teachers so that they can best teach *all* students.

Related services during typical routines

Related service personnel (including speech and language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, behavior consultants, etc.) play a valuable role in supporting students and teachers in an inclusive school. For example, a speech and language pathologist may join a student in chorus to support him in refining vocalizations when singing, and support another student who uses facilitated communication in a writing class. An occupational therapist may assist a student with getting dressed at home before school and another student in Art class or with an after-school job. A physical therapist may provide support during a Physical Education class, and a behavioral consultant may assist a student in moving about the school between classes. By providing this support to students within typical classroom, school, and home routines, related service providers can assist students to be more successful in those natural environments. This significantly differs from the old "pull-out" model when students were removed from natural environments to learn skills in isolation. In addition to direct support to students, related service personnel must provide consultation to teachers, classroom assistants, and parents on how to support a student in all environments. By sharing knowledge and techniques, all those involved with a student are able to enhance a student's learning throughout the day.

Systems change may be required if related service personnel are to be available to provide direct support to students during typical routines (including before and after school) as well as offer consultative support to educators and parents. Policies that allow flexible working hours, value consultation, and encourage role release should be developed. Training and peer support are essential to help related service providers embrace these role changes.

Scheduled team planning time

Collaboration is another essential ingredient for successful inclusion. Parents, educators, students, and related service personnel must collaborate to set priorities and achieve successful outcomes. Classroom teachers and inclusion facilitators must work together to meet common goals. Teachers and classroom assistants must develop strategies to create a classroom environment that encourages all students to learn.

School districts that value collaboration also develop mechanisms for team members to meet and plan together on a regular basis. Administrative support is provided so that teachers, inclusion facilitators, and classroom assistants are free to meet weekly to develop new strategies and evaluate old ones. Parents, related service providers, and other team members should be supported to join these meetings. Written into the district's systems change plan should be support for all teams to meet at mutually convenient times. This support may include providing class coverage to release the classroom teacher and assistant for the meeting, developing a "floating sub" schedule, building common planning periods into the school schedule, and using planning hours before or after school.

Assistive technology

Quality inclusive education requires that students receive the necessary supports to be successful. Some of those supports may involve "high- and low-tech" equipment and adaptations. For example, one student may use a motorized wheelchair to move about the classroom and school. A computer or letter board may assist another student to participate in classwork and conversation. An adapted chair and desk may be all that is needed for a student to work alongside her classmates. In each of these examples, technological supports help students fully participate in all school, home, and community events.

"Schools of the future should strive to be communities of learners where intellectual development and adaptability to change become driving forces for everyone — students and staff alike — but where the climate is humane and caring, promoting respect for diversity."
Souhegan High School Operating Principles, Amherst, NH

Assistive technology is defined as "any item, piece of equipment, or product...that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities..." (Public Law 100-407). School districts must develop collaborative relationships with families and outside agencies to ensure that all students are provided with the necessary technological supports. Sources such as Medicaid, medical insurance, equipment loan programs, and private vendors may assist the school district and family in accessing necessary evaluations and equipment. Systems change plans should include the evaluation of the present system of accessing technology, the methods of training and follow-up, and the development of strategies to use equipment outside of the school building.

Friendship as an educational issue

Few people deny how important friendship is in achieving a full and satisfying life. Few educators deny that friends play a large part in students' lives both in and out of school. Few parents deny how lonely a child can be if he or she has no friends. Schools are beginning to recognize friendship as an educational issue, given the impact it has on developing a full and satisfying life long after graduation.

As classrooms welcome students of all abilities and disabilities, it is important that schools teach the values of accepting differences, honoring individual contributions, fostering interdependence, and nurturing friendships. Classrooms and schools are places where friendships can be cultivated so that they grow beyond the school day. Teachers can become friendship facilitators for students who need this support. Parents can be encouraged to facilitate friendships after school, on weekends, and during the summer. A collaboration between school and home can ensure that students have meaningful relationships both in and out of school.

A systems change support plan should include ways in which friendships will be facilitated. Plans may include training in both values and strategies for teachers, parents, and students, and the inclusion of friendship as an educational goal in the school district's philosophy.

Change is happening quickly in Gerry's school district. Students with disabilities have returned to their neighborhood schools and are fully included as valued members of regular education classrooms. Teachers have received training and support and are beginning to feel comfortable and competent with educating all students in their classes.

Gerry is quite pleased with the changes he sees, but feels the district has addressed only a part of the educational reform question. He reconvenes the inclusion committee and asks for their support in re-examining school policies and philosophies to determine how best to restructure the entire educational system. Gerry agrees that the district has done an outstanding job in reforming the educational supports and services for students with disabilities — but he feels it is time to implement reform strategies so that all students can receive the highest quality education. The committee now has a new name — the equity and excellence committee — and a new mission.

Inclusion is a part of the greater whole of quality education for all students. Classrooms that include students who have varying strengths, learning styles, and gifts, and utilize educational strategies that acknowledge and value that diversity, are becoming widespread in schools throughout New Hampshire and the country.

Systems change involves the evaluation and restructuring of existing educational philosophy and policies so that quality education can become a reality for all students. While this chapter focuses primarily on the issues concerning inclusive education for students with disabilities, it is strongly suggested that a more comprehensive approach to school reform be taken. Much has been written on restructuring American schools, and many schools throughout the country have developed innovative approaches for educating students. The quality of education in many schools is on the rise; however, it is important that school reform efforts improve the quality of education for all students. Unfortunately, not all of these approaches recognize and include students with significant disabilities. Therefore, it is essential that all systems change and restructuring efforts result in schools that truly are for *all* students.

Including students with disabilities into regular education classes and neighborhood schools creates an atmosphere that respects and values the diversity of all learners. Students with and without disabilities learn to accept the strengths and needs of others, as well as the strengths and needs within themselves. The regular classroom community becomes a place where all can freely offer support, and all can freely receive it, a place where doing something a bit differently is valued and respected, and a place where the diversity of our human community is celebrated.

The challenge of introducing and sustaining inclusive education is greatest when classroom teachers use approaches which rely primarily on homogeneous ability groups, oral instructions, and the use of only one or two formats (written reports or multiple choice tests) for demonstrating what has been learned. Inclusive education tends to be most successful when teachers use instructional practices which are effective for heterogeneous groups of students. Certainly the *type* of instruction should not prevent students with disabilities from being members of regular classrooms. However, it is wise to provide teachers with information and training about strategies that enhance the learning of all students, regardless of ability.

For example, many schools have taken a good hard look at the curriculum guides that are being used in classrooms today. Some schools have decided to rewrite grade level curricula taking into account innovative approaches such as the Reading and Writing Process (Hansen, Newkirk & Graves, 1985) and Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1988). Secondary schools have instituted internships, mentorships, and community-service opportunities for all students. When schools work to incorporate new strategies into the classroom and school, students with and without disabilities benefit. Because

much of the research that supports these strategies is based in valuing diverse learning communities, schools which employ these strategies find great success when teaching students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Any school district developing a systems change plan is wise to strongly encourage teachers to gain greater comfort with these teaching strategies. Plans may include training and peer mentorships for teachers and community information sessions.

Within both regular and special education, educators are raising questions about what constitutes good teaching. Most agree that good teaching happens when teachers recognize that all students are unique, capable learners and value this diversity in their classrooms. Classroom teachers realize that teaching a class of 30 students using only one instructional methodology is not effective. They realize that all students learn differently and therefore teachers take advantage of a variety of teaching styles and approaches. The experiences of New Hampshire educators validate what researchers all across the country are finding as they study the characteristics of effective schools and successful inclusion — good education happens when teachers focus on building the gifts and strengths of all students, rather than on "fixing" the deficits and disabilities.

Section Two

STUDENT AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Chapter 3:

Moving into the Regular Education Classroom

Chapter 4:

Making Inclusion Work

Chapter 5:

Modifying Curriculum and Providing Student Supports

Chapter 6:

Expanding Classroom and School Routines

Chapter Three

MOVING INTO THE REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOM

All students are educated as full-time members of regular age-appropriate classes in neighborhood schools, with necessary supports provided to teachers, students, and schools, so that all can be successful.

For many years, students with disabilities received most or all of their education in self-contained, special education classes, generally out of their home community or school. It was not uncommon for students to attend classes taught by the same teacher — and with the same classmates — year after year. Because these students were not attending regular education classes, the opportunity to move through the grades was slim or non-existent. Consequently, planning for yearly transitions received little attention.

Now that communities and schools are embracing inclusive education and students with disabilities are receiving their education in typical age-appropriate classes, the need for team planning for transitions into a new school or a new grade becomes essential. It is important for teams to work together to ensure that students move smoothly between schools and between grades.

For most students without disabilities, changing schools and/or grades occurs naturally. For students with disabilities, especially those students entering into regular education for the first time, these changes may be new, and therefore, challenging. Students with disabilities may need extra support and planning for smooth transitions into a new school or grade. Consider the following examples that highlight some typical challenges.

Ryan, 11, attends a special education school several miles outside of his home community. Ryan's mother recently learned about the benefits of inclusive education and made a request to the principal of the neighborhood school to have Ryan receive his education in a regular class this year. The principal does not feel equipped to educate Ryan in the local school because of his unique needs.

Katherine attends "Growing to Learn," a community preschool, and receives all of her support alongside her typical peers. Katherine's future Kindergarten teacher and principal are having a difficult time figuring out how to include Katherine's physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, and all of her equipment in a regular classroom.

Tim, 17, is a high school junior with severe disabilities who would like to graduate with his class next year. School administrators have told Tim's parents that if he graduates with his peers, the school must relinquish all responsibility for him.

These examples illustrate the variety of concerns and considerations that need to be addressed as students with disabilities move into a new school or classroom, or enter into post-secondary experiences. This chapter will provide information on the steps necessary for students with disabilities to receive the supports necessary for successful transitions.

This chapter is structured to provide both information about, and examples of, transitioning a student from a separate, special education placement into a typical age-appropriate class(es).

in the neighborhood school. While the examples and text will focus on the transition from a segregated school to a neighborhood school, strategies discussed are also applicable when assisting a student in the move from grade to grade or from one school to another (for example, elementary to middle school). Teams are encouraged to use natural supports for moving any student through the educational process.

Planning ahead

To facilitate a smooth transition, educators throughout New Hampshire indicate the usefulness of planning for the arrival of a student prior to the first day of school. Planning prior to a student's entrance into a new school allows essential issues to be addressed in a timely and relaxed manner. Issues requiring advanced planning may include, but are not limited to:

- education provided to families and educators about the benefits of inclusive education
- transfer and storage of equipment
- issues of accessibility (i.e., ramps, elevators, bathrooms, bus)
- education about alternative methods of communication such as sign language, facilitated communication, and other augmentative communication techniques
- specific curriculum modifications and classroom strategies
- learning about positive behavioral strategies
- familiarizing the student with his or her new building, classroom, classmates, teacher, and principal.

Students, as well as teachers, benefit from good planning. Teachers and support personnel have unique needs and preferences that can be addressed prior to the start of a new year. By planning ahead, team members have the opportunity to receive training on inclusive education and curriculum modification strategies, schedule observations of effective educational approaches and styles, and get to know the student and his or her family. Time taken before the new year begins enables the families, teachers, and support personnel to establish rapport and gain a better understanding of the student and the goals of inclusive education.

While planning ahead has considerable benefits, most teams know that it is not always possible. A new student moving into a school district, or a parent requesting an immediate change of placement, necessitates that teams use all available resources to move a student into the neighborhood school and regular education class without delays. Teams are encouraged to use the process outlined in this chapter to accommodate all transitions in the most effective manner.

Guiding principles

Transitions do not happen in isolation. They exist within the context of school, community, and family life. For this reason, it is important for teams to re-familiarize themselves with the guiding principles of inclusive education:

- All students are educated as full-time members of regular age-appropriate classes in neighborhood schools, with necessary supports provided to teachers, students, and schools, so that all can be successful.
- Collaborative teamwork is a key ingredient to successful education. Families and students are supported to fully participate in the team process and to take leadership roles.
- Students are treated with respect. People-first language is used. Students are discussed in terms of their strengths and gifts, not deficits and disabilities.
- Students are included in the planning process and, as they get older, are supported to take the leadership role.
- Flexibility and creativity are valued by all team members. Teams take a win-win approach to problem-solving, and are committed to finding solutions, not obstacles.
- When in doubt, a fresh outlook is obtained. The team is opened to students, teachers, building personnel, parents, family friends, outside consultants, or anyone else who might have a new idea.

Because there is no "cookbook" to provide the team with a "recipe", the team's ability to work together, brainstorm possibilities, and overcome barriers influences how smooth and successful the transition can be.

Trisha is an 8 year old girl who is completing her third year in the "primary A" classroom in a school for students with disabilities. Because of her district's new commitment to full inclusion, Trisha will be transitioning into a regular classroom in her neighborhood school in September. The principal and teachers have never before taught a student with severe disabilities and they are both apprehensive and excited about this new opportunity. Trisha's parents and the school principal have met to begin discussing what needs to be done to facilitate Trisha's transition into her neighborhood school.

The process of facilitating a student's move into regular education is one that relies heavily on the commitment and flexibility of professionals and parents. Because there is no "cookbook" to provide the team with a "recipe", the team's ability to work together, brainstorm possibilities, and overcome barriers influences how smooth and successful the transition can be. The Institute on Disability, with assistance from educators and families throughout New Hampshire, has developed a Transition Process (refer to Chart 3) that has assisted school districts throughout the

Chart 3
The Transition Process

1. Identify the members of the transition team, including but not limited to the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), principal, paraprofessional, peers, inclusion facilitator, and related service providers.
2. Identify the neighborhood school (the school that the student would attend if he or she did not have a disability).
3. Identify the grade level appropriate to the student's chronological age.
4. Identify the classroom teacher(s).
5. Identify in-house and outside supports (special educator, inclusion facilitator, related service providers).
6. Develop a timeline for activities (visitations, meetings).
7. Schedule trainings for all involved.
8. Schedule regular planning meetings among classroom teacher(s), support personnel, and parents.
9. Schedule the inclusion facilitator's time in the classroom(s).
10. Review and revise the IEP to reflect the regular classroom environment(s).
11. Use natural supports in the transition from grade-to-grade, school-to-school, or school to post-secondary experiences.

state to successfully move students into fully inclusive environments. This plan, revised and refined throughout the years, can serve as a guide. To illustrate the use of the Transition Process, the remainder of this chapter will follow Trisha and her team as they work toward achieving full inclusion.

Identification of the transition team

The initial meeting between Trisha's parents and the principal resulted in the development of a transition team that would guide and oversee the process of moving Trisha into her neighborhood school. Although the parents and principal are certainly key players—they think it best to include a variety of other members as part of the team. Trisha's team will include people from her current school (the teacher and the physical therapist) as well as her possible future teachers (the two third grade teachers from the neighborhood school). One of the neighborhood school's special educators is included, as is the special education director. Trisha is included as a part of the team. Her parents represent her, but it is expected that as she gets older she will represent herself and her needs. The team knows that as they progress with the plan, other members (i.e., a classroom assistant, friends) may need to be added to round out the team.

Identification of a student-specific transition team should be in place prior to the development of the transition plan. Each team will involve different members, but most teams include some, if not all, of the following members: the student, parents, principal, current and future teachers, classroom assistant, special educator, inclusion facilitator, related service providers, special education director, and peers. Anyone who has a significant role in the life and education of the student should be considered a potential member of his or her team.

Once the transition team is established, members have responsibilities throughout the entire process. While it may not be necessary for all members to attend all meetings, it is important to keep all members informed of activities. As with Trisha's team, membership can change as the process progresses — members who are part of a student's old school can drop out and personnel from the new school can be added as new members.

Identification of school, grade level, classroom teacher(s)

As the new transition team meets for the first time, their first decision is easy — Trisha will become a third grader in her neighborhood elementary school. This is a simple decision as the team has a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the values of full inclusion. Trisha's parents indicate that she knows several children from her neighborhood and hopes that Trisha can be in the same class as some of these students. The principal and the third grade teachers meet to discuss which teacher's style is most suited to Trisha's learning style, and Ms. Methany is selected to be Trisha's new teacher. Ms. Methany will attend all subsequent meetings, and provide information to the other teachers as needed.

Discussion at the first transition meeting should involve exactly where the student will be going to school. Once the neighborhood school has been identified, the grade level and classroom teacher(s) should be decided. Care should be taken to adhere to best practices of educating students in neighborhood schools and in age-appropriate classrooms.

Everyone involved should have the opportunity to take an active role in planning for the student's next educational year. Educators will feel a greater investment in a student's future if they know they will play a significant role in guiding the student and planning classroom supports. It is important that the classroom teacher(s) assumes a primary role rather than assigning this role to specialists. Regular classroom teachers must be empowered to identify students' goals and learning styles, and to determine ways to provide support.

Photo by Tom Davison

Deciding on appropriate supports for the student and teacher(s) is one of the most critical jobs for the transition team. Making certain that enough support is available, without it becoming a barrier to inclusion, is a vital component.

Identification of in-house and outside supports

Once Ms. Methany is chosen as the classroom teacher, the team sets out to plan the best ways to provide support to her and to Trisha. The team knows that support needs will change as the year progresses but wants to be certain that enough supports are in place from the beginning to get the year off to a great start.

The team, with Ms. Methany and Trisha's parents taking the lead, discusses what supports will be needed and who can best provide them. The team knows that Mr. Harkin, a special educator in the building, will be involved, and together he and Ms. Methany will make the necessary modifications or support plans for Trisha and the class. Mr. Harkin will now be called an inclusion facilitator to best describe his new role. The team identifies the related service providers (physical and occupational therapists and speech pathologist) who will also provide support to Trisha and the classroom teacher, and brings them into the team planning process.

The team then discusses the idea of a classroom assistant to provide support to Ms. Methany and all of the students in her class. Everyone, especially Trisha's parents, are adamant that they do not want a "personal aide" assigned to Trisha. They know that there is real danger for that person to be viewed as Trisha's teacher. But they also know that another adult in the classroom will assist Ms. Methany in being able to best educate all of her students. The team decides that the class will be assigned a classroom assistant who will offer support to the entire class.

Ms. Methany describes how all students in her class support each other and she says she expects that much of the support that Trisha will need can be provided by her classmates. She tells the team that, as the year progresses, she would like to spend more time discussing this and would like feedback from all team members on how to best use peers to provide support to Trisha. The team wholeheartedly agrees.

Deciding on appropriate supports for the student and teacher(s) is one of the most critical jobs for the transition team. Making certain that enough support is available, without it becoming a barrier to inclusion, is a vital component. As in Trisha's story, the classroom teacher(s) and parents are in a prime position to discuss the kinds of supports that would be most effective. Parents know the specific needs of the student, and the classroom teacher(s) knows the specific needs of the classroom. The team must look toward these individuals to set the stage for the provision of supports. For supports to truly assist a student in being successful in and out of the classroom, all support providers (i.e., related service providers, inclusion facilitators, classroom assistants) should be certain that they are using their skills in one or more of these three ways:

- supporting a student to more fully participate and learn in the classroom
- supporting the teacher(s) to be the best possible teacher to all students in the class
- supporting the entire class to be successful.

Most teachers know that peer support is an important ingredient to successful classrooms, and that too much reliance on adult support is not beneficial to any student. Though the transition team may not be able to specifically identify the ways in which peer support will be used until the student is a part of the classroom, it is still important to discuss the merits of this support and put it on the agenda for meetings throughout the school year. However, it is essential that student supports are not confused with friendships and that both are allowed to develop naturally.

Many of the supports mentioned are specific to a student and are provided by people who may not be typically involved in all students' lives (e.g., a speech pathologist). Although these supports are important, it is essential that the team be aware of — and fully utilize — the natural supports available to all students in a school. Chapters 4 – 6 will address this issue and it is recommended that transition teams become familiar with these strategies.

Develop a timeline

Things are going well for Trisha's transition team. Good decisions are being made that will support everyone in Trisha's move into third grade. And although no one on the team loves meetings, it is agreed that it will be helpful to meet regularly up to the day Trisha enters her new school. The team knows that it is impossible (and unwise) to try to plan everything, so they have also scheduled a meeting at the beginning of the school year to check on the supports, as well as brainstorm any "beginning of the year" concerns.

Because Trisha is moving into both a new school and class, the team feels there are several things that will help Trisha, her parents, and school staff feel more comfortable with the move. Arrangements are made for Trisha and her parents to visit her new school twice before the school year ends. This provides Trisha with a chance to meet her new teacher and be introduced to some of the students in the school. Ms. Methany, Mr. Harkin, and the classroom assistant are scheduled to observe Trisha in her current school as well as visit her at home. The principal tells Trisha's parents about the open house for new students that is scheduled the day before school begins, and Trisha and her parents plan to attend.

A transition team not only identifies the grade level, the classroom teacher, and necessary supports, they also set the timeline for diverse activities such as the day the student will enter the new school, and the meetings and visitations that need to occur prior to this date. In Trisha's story, choosing the date of her entrance into third grade was easy — Trisha would begin on the first day of school, just like all other students. For a student moving from grade-to-grade, this would be the case as well. But for many students, the first day in the new school may occur once school is already in session. In either situation, the timeline should afford parents, the student, and teachers opportunities to engage in meetings or visitations as they feel necessary. Some teams schedule numerous visits to observe the student in the existing educational placement; other teams feel it is more helpful to have the student pay visits to the new school. In any event, activities should be scheduled that best support the student's smooth transition into the school and classroom. As always, the student and the family should be encouraged to participate in any typical new student orientation activities offered by the school. Suggested activities that have been helpful prior to the student's first day of school include:

- visits by members of the team to observe the student in the current placement
- visits by the student to the classroom and school to meet teachers, classmates, and to be involved in a sample of school and classroom activities
- exchange of letters and/or pictures between the student and his or her future classmates
- an introduction of the student to the class by his or her parents

Schedule training for team members and school staff

Trisha's transition team is feeling quite good about their work. They have planned extensively around Trisha and the class, and now they begin to discuss ways in which team members can gain more information and learn strategies for inclusive education. The principal quickly jumps in and reminds them that if inclusion is going to be the philosophy of the school, training must be made available to all school staff.

To encourage teachers to embrace not only the ***philosophy****, but the* ***practice*** *of inclusive education, it is important to provide them with numerous opportunities to understand the benefits and the "how-to's" of inclusion.*

The special education director volunteers to research different ways in which training can be offered. The information she collects and later shares with the team includes consultants who are able to conduct trainings in the school building, as well as numerous workshops that are offered throughout the state. The principal agrees to schedule four in-school trainings and offers the team members release days to attend other workshops. Many team members attend a day-long workshop on the philosophy of inclusion and one on classroom strategies. Ms. Methany and Mr. Harkin spend a day visiting other elementary classes that include students with disabilities, and speak with team members from those classes to get additional support and ideas. Later, they will make a presentation at a faculty meeting to share what they have learned.

While the previous section addressed the development of a timeline for activities specific to a student and the team, it is also important for a transition team to develop a timeline of training opportunities for all team members and school staff. The opportunity to receive ongoing training on issues related to inclusion and best educational practices is an essential component of this process.

Many teachers have not had training or experience teaching students with a wide variety of abilities and disabilities. To encourage teachers to embrace not only the *philosophy*, but the *practice* of inclusive education, it is important to provide them with numerous opportunities to understand the benefits and the "how-to's" of inclusion. Workshops on such topics as "The Benefits of Including Students with Disabilities in Regular Education", "Classroom Strategies and Curriculum Modification", "Equity and Excellence - School Restructuring and Inclusion", and "Facilitating Friendships" can be helpful to both school personnel and students. Opportunities to visit and observe fully inclusive classrooms and schools should also be provided.

Although there are many professionals offering training in these and other topics, teams should also recognize the wealth of trainers within their ranks. Parents of students with disabilities can be extremely effective presenters on the values of inclusive education. People with disabilities can present on issues of inclusion, exclusion, and self-determination, and serve as valuable role models for all students. Team members who have attended trainings can present on what they have learned, and classroom teachers can present on the experiences in their classrooms.

School-wide support for inclusion comes when all staff are encouraged and supported to gain information and skills. Teams should work closely with school administrators to make sure trainings take place at times that are convenient for all school personnel — including teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and school support staff. Administrative support is essential for teachers to be released from their classes to take advantage of training opportunities.

Parents and community members should not be left out of the training schedule. Parents should be supported to attend the same trainings as school staff and additional evening or weekend sessions can be provided to encourage attendance by family and community members.

Schedule regular planning meetings

The planning for supports, personnel, and training is just about complete. The new school year is approaching and the team is confident that Trisha will be happy and successful in third grade. While the team no longer has to plan for Trisha's transition into third grade, they now need to make plans to continue their support throughout the school year.

Ms. Methany and Mr. Harkin work well together and have discussed many of the ways in which they will continue to collaborate throughout the year. They both feel strongly that they must continue to meet on a weekly basis to discuss day-to-day strategies for curriculum modification, peer supports, discipline and the like. But Ms. Methany is concerned that they will not be enough time for them to meet once school begins. The principal offers to arrange for substitutes to cover Ms. Methany's class [illegible] each week to give her up for the meeting. He also suggests that the school could [illegible] meeting. Mr. Harkin agrees to meet [illegible] for Ms. Methany as he [illegible] teaching responsibilities [illegible] to accommodate her schedule. The team agrees with this plan and Trisha's parents and the related service providers request to join these meetings every six weeks. The team is now even more confident that this year will be a great success.

Once the student has become a member of the regular classroom, there is no longer a need for the formal transition team to exist. However, there continues to be a need for those most closely involved in the student's education — the parents, teacher(s), assistant, inclusion facilitator — to meet regularly. Regularly scheduled planning meetings provide opportunities to discuss classroom strategies and upcoming lessons and activities, and to resolve any issues that arise.

Administrative support for these regular meetings is critical. Teachers must be supported to have adequate time to meet and plan with other team members. Simply having these meetings before or after school or even during a teacher's established planning period may not be enough. For teams inexperienced with inclusion, working in close collaboration with other professionals may be time-consuming. For this reason, it is suggested that the classroom teacher(s) be supported with an additional planning period to accommodate this meeting time.

Schools sometimes find it difficult to figure out the logistics of providing teachers with additional time for weekly team meetings. There are a variety of ways to secure additional planning time, and the building principal needs to work with the faculty to decide what method works best for each team. Strategies that have been successfully used in schools throughout New Hampshire include:

- the classroom teacher has one less "duty" ("lunch duty", "study hall") per week
- a substitute, volunteer, school assistant, or principal takes over the class during a designated time each week
- the inclusion facilitator teaches the class one period per week allowing the teacher(s) an extra planning period
- incentive pay, or "comp time" is provided to the teacher(s) and assistant to come in early or stay late one day per week
- common planning time is scheduled on a weekly basis for all teachers.

Schedule the inclusion facilitator's time in the classroom(s)

Trisha is now a full-time member of Ms. Methany's third grade class. All of the planning has paid off and things are going very well. Trisha is participating in all class lessons and routines and has already made several new friends. Her mother is thrilled because she has been invited to her first birthday party!

Although things are going very well, Ms. Methany is frustrated about the way in which Trisha participates in math. She feels Trisha is not really fully included in the class lesson and is not getting the most out of math time. During her weekly meetings with Mr. Harkin, they discuss this but she is still

Teams frequently find that the high expectations, peer models, and supports that are a natural part of a regular education classroom allow all students to succeed — perhaps even more than anyone ever dared to imagine.

not satisfied. Ms. Methany realizes the missing link may be that Mr. Harkin has never been in her class during math. At their next meeting, she suggests that they arrange a rotating schedule of times when Mr. Harkin will be in the class, so that he will be better able to offer suggestions and strategies. Mr. Harkin readily agrees and a schedule is developed that begins with an observation of math. Ms. Methany and Mr. Harkin meet and begin to develop appropriate modifications for Trisha during this part of the day.

Although it seems obvious, it is important that there be regularly scheduled times for the inclusion facilitator, as well as other team members, to observe the student in the regular classroom(s). By observing lessons and activities in the classroom, the inclusion facilitator can work more effectively with the classroom teacher(s) to develop curriculum modifications based upon typical learning activities. Although it is important for the inclusion facilitator to observe all times of the day, the classroom teacher(s) should take the lead in recommending when observations should be made. Related service providers may also be asked to spend time in the classroom(s) during a variety of class lessons and routines so their input can be best used to support students and teachers throughout the day.

Review the individual education plan

It feels like a reunion. Many of the original members of the transition planning team have come together to review Trisha's IEP. Trisha has been a member of the third grade for six weeks and the team feels the need to review the goals that were written into the IEP. The meeting starts off noisily, as members who have been out of the loop want to hear all about Trisha's days in third grade.

This meeting is convened to discuss Trisha's IEP in terms of her involvement in third grade. Although many of the goals are still applicable, team members state that many of the goals are either already mastered or no longer appropriate. Once again, Trisha's parents and classroom teacher take the lead in discussing Trisha and the class, and the team begins to refine the educational plan. Trisha and her friends give their assessment of how things are going. New goals are added and old goals are rewritten to respect Trisha's unique needs and the integrity of the classroom. As the redesigned IEP begins to take shape, the team expresses their appreciation of how much has changed for Trisha and how her inclusion in third grade has made her education much more meaningful. Ms. Methany is pleased with the new IEP and knows that the revisions will be appreciated by Trisha's Art, Music, and Physical Education teachers as well.

As the transition becomes a distant memory, and the school year is well underway, the team should meet once again — this time to review a student's IEP in relation to the new class(es) and new school. Once the new student, classmates, and the classroom teacher(s) have had time to get to know one another and become familiar with the new school routine, the IEP should be thoroughly reviewed to make sure

that objectives can be met within the routines of a typical school day. In Trisha's case, one of her IEP objectives stated that she was to "increase her upper extremity strength by rolling clay on an upward slant board twice a week during a physical therapy session." After the teacher and the physical therapist met, they changed this goal to read that "Trisha will increase her upper arm strength by washing the chalkboard daily with assistance from a peer." This goal supports the notion of using natural opportunities to teach valuable skills.

Because the IEP is a working document, it is important to review it frequently to address changes in a student's environment and skills. Many teams find that including a student in a regular classroom(s) results in the immediate mastery of many IEP goals. For example, Trisha's parents were thrilled when Ms. Methany told them that Trisha had no problem sitting through a 30 minute lesson. They reminded the teacher that Trisha had a goal on her IEP to increase her attention span to *five* minutes. Teams frequently find that the high expectations, peer models, and supports that are a natural part of a regular education classroom allow all students to succeed — perhaps even more than anyone ever dared to imagine.

Use natural supports for grade-to-grade or school-to-school transitions

Third grade is drawing to a close. Trisha and her classmates are anxious for the beginning of summer vacation and are excited about their "graduation" into fourth grade. The move for Trisha and her classmates involves more than just a move to a new grade. They are all moving into a new school as well.

With the move into a new grade and a new school, Trisha's team wonders if they should reconvene the transition planning team and begin the transition process all over again. Luckily, Ms. Methany is on the ball. She reminds the team that all of her students are going to be moving into a new grade and a new school and that she is planning a variety of activities to help all students make this transition. Ms. Methany tells the team that she has arranged a "move-up day" in mid-June. All third grade students will spend the day in the new building, with fourth grade students providing guidance and support. She also tells the team that the fourth grade teachers are planning to spend a day in the third grade classes getting to know their future students, and that she and Trisha's future fourth grade teacher will have regular meetings. The team breathes a sigh of relief that Trisha will move from grade-to-grade in the same way as all other students. They all feel good knowing that Trisha is a true member of her class and school.

Although the previous steps involved transitioning a student from a segregated environment into a fully inclusive one, this last step can be used to assist fully included students who are moving from grade-to-grade, from school-to-school, and from school to post-secondary experiences. Students with disabilities who are fully included in regular education should take full advantage of typical transition experiences that are available for all students. As students move from grade-to-grade, school-to-school, or through graduation, they participate in a variety of activities to assist them in preparing for new placements and expectations. These activities — school and class orientations, move-up days, class and individual visits to new schools, meetings with guidance counselors — assist all students in making smooth and natural transitions. Students with disabilities must be supported to fully participate in these natural opportunities.

Special mention should be made of students who are of graduation age. For these students, experiencing graduation — a rite of passage — is especially important. In the past, many students with disabilities exited the school system without the closure that a senior year and a graduation ceremony provided. Although some students with disabilities will be supported by their school systems after their senior year in high school, it is essential that those years follow the natural pattern for high school graduates without disabilities. Upon completion of the senior year of high school, a student must receive continued support to further his or her education, get a job, and/or enter into adult life in the community. It is important that teams enlist the support of all existing resources (guidance counselors, college placement personnel, family members, friends, vocational rehabilitation counselors, etc.) to assist a student in planning for post-graduation dreams.

Chapter Four

MAKING INCLUSION WORK

*Once **in**, the task at hand becomes creating an environment where students of all abilities learn **with** one another.*

As teachers throughout the country open not only their doors, but their hearts and their minds to inclusive education, they often ask how best to make inclusion work in their classrooms. Teachers and parents are rightfully wary of students being placed in regular education classes but participating only in separate alternative curricula and lessons. All involved want to be certain that students with disabilities are fully and actively taking part in all class and school activities.

When a student with disabilities becomes a member of a regular class, a teacher's first thought is often about the modifications and supports necessary for the student to learn in his or her classroom. Teachers may start by focusing upon the discrepancy between the skills of the student with disabilities and the other students in the class. Teachers may be concerned that everything that occurs throughout the school day will need to be changed so that this student can learn. However, as teachers involved in inclusive education are quick to point out, there are many naturally occurring opportunities during the day that, *unchanged*, enable students with disabilities to learn important skills. A review of Chapter 1, which discusses many of these natural learning opportunities, is suggested.

In this chapter, three assumptions are made:

- All students are full-time members of a regular class(es) and receive all special education and related service support in the classroom.
- Necessary supports for teachers and students have been determined, and are in place (e.g., equipment and materials, paraprofessional support, training opportunities, consultation time).
- Learning priorities for students have been established and communicated among all team members.

The next two chapters will focus on classroom strategies for teaching students with disabilities in regular education classes. Chapter 5 outlines a process for modifying the regular curriculum so that all students are active participants in classroom activities. Chapter 6 describes ways of expanding classroom routines to create opportunities for students to learn skills not typically addressed in the regular curriculum, and ways of providing unique student supports in regular education settings. While there are no magic methods or formulas which guarantee perfection, New Hampshire educators have learned a great deal about what it takes to make inclusive education successful, and about the strategies that support and facilitate the process of including students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

In many schools, the first step toward inclusive education is getting students into regular classrooms (See Chapter 3). While this essential task is often challenging, the work isn't done once the student is through the door. Once *in*, the task at hand becomes creating an environment where students of all abilities learn *with*

one another (Marsha Forest, personal conversation, 1992). As teachers become aware of the benefits of inclusive education, new questions arise. What can this student *do* in my classroom? What can this student *learn* in my class? Both questions are formulated when teachers think about regular curriculum, lesson plans, and schedules. Teachers want to know how students with disabilities will be able to participate in these daily activities and routines.

Before moving into specific steps for modifying curriculum and providing supports, a few general guidelines will be discussed. Although the detailed steps on how to plan modifications and supports are important, it is useful for teams to begin this section by thinking about essential issues: How does the school community affect classroom strategies? What do we mean by "curriculum"? What exactly is a "lesson"? How does the team work together? How do we take into consideration all of the essential aspects of this student's life?

The school community

Although most teachers concerned with inclusive education have questions about the day-to-day events that occur in their classrooms, it is important to also look at the bigger picture — the school community — when developing strategies. The classroom environment is greatly influenced by the decisions, activities, and values of the larger school community. The dynamics of a particular school can make successful education in the classroom more or less likely. For example, a third grade student is a member of a school that continues to house a special education resource room. This student is "pulled out" of the classroom three mornings a week to receive academic assistance. The classroom teacher and team members modify, as needed, the curriculum throughout the rest of the week, but experience frustration when the student has difficulty keeping up with class activities. In this scenario, the problem lies not with curriculum modification — a classroom issue — but with the way that special education support services are structured — a school issue. While this chapter will focus on strategies and support in the regular classroom environment, the authors strongly suggest that all teams give appropriate attention to this larger perspective. Chapter 2 addresses the systems change strategies that are useful in this endeavor.

Essential considerations

Before, during, and after curriculum modification decisions are made, teams need to consider the many essential aspects of a student's learning. Although creative problem-solving efforts may be focused on the specific lesson or activity at hand, many other factors affect whether or not a student is an active, valued, and full-time member of his or her regular classroom. Use the following questions as guidelines and review them frequently throughout the school year.

- Does the student have all of the *necessary supports* (e.g., technology, medical)?
- Does the student have a way to *communicate all day long*?
- Are all modifications and materials *age-appropriate*?
- Do modifications take into consideration the concept of *comparable challenge*?
- Does the student have opportunities to *give as well as receive* support?
- Do modifications keep in mind the *highest expectations*?
- Has the student been given all of the necessary instructional opportunities to gain *core skills* (reading, math, and writing)?

Discovering gaps or problems as a result of asking these questions should never stop the process of inclusion or curriculum modification. Rather, the questions should be a catalyst for further discussion and planning. For example, a team might be making modifications for a ninth grade student's math class and realize that the student does not have a way to communicate. The student should continue to attend the math class, and modifications should still be made, but an immediate effort to address the communication need should occur simultaneously. The "essential considerations" set the stage for success and paint the background for curriculum modification.

It is neither necessary nor beneficial to create separate curricula for students with disabilities. By providing students with appropriate supports and modifications to the regular curriculum, all students are able to learn together with their peers.

Team planning

Teams may wonder when decisions about curriculum modification should be made given a very busy school schedule. Educators who have experience including students with disabilities find it helpful to set aside time on a regular basis to plan with team members how the student will participate in the classroom. Many schools believe it is important for the classroom teacher(s), the inclusion facilitator, and the classroom assistant to meet weekly to plan necessary supports and modifications for future lessons. In other schools there may not be time for scheduled meetings, so teachers find ways to meet informally to brainstorm ideas about modifying the curriculum for particular students. Regardless of the model, it is important that the responsibility for making modifications does not rest with just one person. At the same time, the entire team does not need to be a part of every single decision. The team's degree of success in designing creative solutions for student participation usually depends on their ability to problem-solve collaboratively — valuing the contributions of all team members. Another predictor of success is the team's commitment to inclusion, their commitment to making it work.

The composition of a team is dependent on the student who is at the center of the team. Every team must include, as equal and valued members, the people who are closest to the student (parents, family members, and friends) and of course, the student. As a student gets older, the team focus will shift away from being parent-directed to becoming student-directed so that parent priorities and student priorities are appropriately addressed. Other essential team members include the classroom teacher(s), support personnel (classroom assistant, special educator, related service providers), and school administrators. Although each team will look a little different, it is important that all involved be committed to securing the student's full and meaningful participation in all aspects of class, school, and community.

Alternative vs. modified curriculum

In the past, there was talk in the field of special education about "parallel" or "alternative" curricula. Some educators believed that student participation in regular classes required separate curricula for students with disabilities — for example, the class might be working on a spelling lesson, and a student with disabilities might be learning number skills by putting playing cards in the correct order. It is neither necessary nor beneficial to create separate curricula for students with disabilities. By providing students with appropriate supports and modifications to the regular curriculum, all students are able to learn together with their peers. Therefore, the starting point for all curriculum modification is the regular curriculum. In all examples, the word "curriculum" refers to the regular education curriculum.

What is a lesson?

The term "lesson" is also used throughout the next two chapters. It is important to recognize that a typical lesson is made up of a series of distinct and varied activities. For example, a math lesson might consist of reviewing last night's homework assignment, followed by problem-solving in small groups with math manipulatives, and end with a whole class discussion of each group's findings. As teams think about making modifications to a "lesson," it is wise to remember the many parts that compose a single lesson and to design necessary modifications for each part. Teams will often find that one part of a lesson may need to be modified for a student, while the others do not.

On-the-spot modifications

Planning meetings and the ideas they generate are important and should be taken advantage of whenever possible. However, teams cannot always be prepared for all of the activities that can occur in the classroom. For this reason, experienced educators also speak about the importance of "on-the-spot" curriculum modification. For example, a teacher might change his or her plans midway through a science lesson. Instead of watching a videotape, the teacher might take advantage of the weather and take the class outside to identify wildflowers. Because it wasn't planned, modifications and supports need to be figured out *during* the activity. Teachers, related service personnel, and classroom assistants are required to creatively solve problems like these many times each day, even in schools where teams have adequate planning time. Because teachers often "seize the moment" to illustrate an important concept, all teachers and support staff need to feel comfortable with on-the-spot curriculum modifications in support of the teacher's innovative style.

The next chapter provides a framework for teams to use when determining how a student will participate in a given lesson or activity. It is designed to guide the team's thinking about curriculum modifications that are either anticipated or on-the-spot.

Chapter Five

MODIFYING CURRICULUM AND PROVIDING STUDENT SUPPORTS

The process is simple, yet requires the creativity and commitment of team members working collaboratively.

When first including a student with disabilities in the classroom it is not uncommon for teachers to ask "How can this student participate in this lesson?" Answering that question requires two steps:

- determining *if* a student needs modifications and/or additional supports to participate in a lesson
- if needed, deciding *which* modifications and/or supports are appropriate for the student during a lesson

The process is simple, yet requires the creativity and commitment of team members working collaboratively. This two-question process for developing curriculum modifications and student supports has been created to help teachers make decisions regarding what, where, when, and how to modify curriculum for students with disabilities. This process was formulated after talking to educators across the state who work in inclusive schools. It is not a tool that provides quick answers; rather it is designed to guide a team's thinking as they create effective solutions.

QUESTION ONE:

Can the student participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students?

Tracy uses an augmentative communication system to complete all written assignments in her high school history class. Tracy types answers to questions, and writes the essays and reports that are assigned by the teacher. In the beginning of the year, Tracy's history work was modified by her team. She was assigned fewer questions to answer, shorter essays to write, and very simple topics for her reports. Eventually Tracy's team realized that these modifications were unnecessary. Just because Tracy uses an augmentative method of communication doesn't mean she needs the support of curriculum modification. Tracy is very capable of doing the work!

When a student with disabilities first enters a regular class(es), the team may believe there will be very few parts of the day that will not need to be modified. However, after several weeks, it is common for teams to report just the opposite. Educators are often surprised by a student's ability to participate in many regular classroom and school activities without modifications or additional supports.

Question 1: "Can the student participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students?" is the first step in the process of developing curriculum modifications and supports. It is essential to always start with this question first. There are many times throughout the day when students with disabilities can be doing the same thing as students without disabilities, with no modifications or individual supports needed. Teams sometimes forget to ask this question because it has been assumed that disability always means different.

When asking the first question, the answer will quite often be, "Yes, the student can participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students." In that case, no modifications or individual supports are necessary for that particular lesson, activity, or part of the day. When the answer is "yes," there is no need to continue to the next questions. The team should feel pleased that the student is participating in the same way as all other students.

Examples:

- Ty does not require any modifications during a music appreciation lesson in seventh grade.
- Katy, a tenth grade student, participates in a presentation on the Arctic timber wolf in the same way as all of her classmates.
- Margaret, a second grader whose academic work is often modified, does not need any modifications during recess or while eating in the cafeteria.
- Bernard, a fifth grade student with severe disabilities, can participate in a creative painting lesson in art class with no modifications.
- Anya listens to a reading of Julius Caesar in her twelfth grade English class.

If however, after asking the first question, the team finds that the answer is "no," the process continues. Teams should move on to the second question and use it to determine appropriate modifications and supports.

Which of the following (one or more) supports and/or modifications are necessary for the student's full participation in this lesson?

After answering "no" to Question 1, the team should move on to ask Question 2. Please note that this question is not "*Can* the student participate?", but instead, "*What is needed* so that the student can participate?" Participation is assumed and teams need only decide what supports and/or modifications are required for the student to do so.

The second question is one that good teachers ask themselves daily for all students in their classes. All students can learn, but not all students learn the same things in exactly the same way. This second question acknowledges the uniqueness of each student, but assumes ability and competence. By asking *what* the student needs to participate in a lesson, the team is asking a question that ensures full participation for all.

While this question appears quite simple, it is, in fact, a question with many and varied answers. Asking this question ultimately enables the team to determine what the student requires to fully participate in a lesson — provision of individual supports, modifications of materials, and/or modifications of the expectations. By simply adapting one or more of these variables, each student is able to participate and be equally challenged. While it would seem simpler if it

It is important that support be provided to the student because of need, not out of habit. It is sometimes easy to fall into a pattern of providing adult or peer support all day long, even at those times when support isn't necessary.

was possible to have a set of "math class modifications" or "music class modifications" that worked for all students, this is not the case. Good education means looking at each student individually.

When team members determine that modification or support is necessary, they then need to determine the *type* of modification and/or support needed. Although the options are plentiful, three basic categories have been created to help teams plan most efficiently:

- providing the student with supports
- providing the student with modified materials
- providing the student with modified expectations

Chart 4, *Curriculum Modification and Student Supports*, gives an overview of these options, while the following paragraphs provide a description of the modifications and supports.

DOES THE STUDENT REQUIRE THE ADDITION OF SUPPORTS?

Hannah loves Biology and has developed an exhibit on the anatomy of a frog for the annual high school science fair. Although her teachers and peers recognize her interest in science, it is sometimes difficult for Hannah to work by herself during Biology labs. Hannah needs assistance getting materials, setting up her experiments, and recording her results. At first the team thought it would be necessary to assign a classroom assistant to support Hannah. Instead, they discussed the issue with Hannah and her friends and asked them their opinions on how best to provide this support. The students were adamant — they could support Hannah during Biology and if they needed any additional help they would be sure to tell the team.

As teams begin the process of answering Question 2, they can ask themselves, "Does the student require the addition of supports in order to successfully participate in this lesson?" Often, a student with disabilities who is unable to participate in a lesson independently can successfully participate in the lesson if provided with additional support. Support in this context does not refer to the equipment or technological supports a student uses on an ongoing basis (for example, a wheelchair or a hearing aid) but the support of another person — peer or adult. This person(s) might be a peer, a teacher, a classroom assistant, a related service provider, or another member of the school staff.

As shown on Chart 4, the utilization of peer support should outweigh the utilization of adult support. Peers are a very natural source of support for all students, and inclusion is most successful in classrooms that recognize the ways in which all students learn from one another. Keep in mind that peer support is not the same as peer tutoring. If there is a classwide or school-wide system for peer tutoring, then certainly students with disabilities can be involved as both tutors and recipients. Teams should be cautious of the student with disabilities always being on the receiving end of peer support.

Regardless of whom the support comes from, it is important that support be provided to the student because of need, not out of habit. It is sometimes easy to fall into a pattern of providing adult or peer support all day long, even at those times when support isn't necessary. The support needs of a student change throughout the day and throughout the year. Although the utilization of support is important, teams should constantly assess the appropriateness of the type and the amount of support that is given. "Aid and fade" has become a strong practice in many New Hampshire schools.

Examples of peer support:

- Emily's friend Kaci pushes her wheelchair on the playground at recess.
- Roberta, a ninth grader, writes down the Algebra homework assignment for her classmate Molly.
- Frank's best friend supports him when he's using facilitated communication at the football team's parties.
- Cooperative learning group members help Paul study for the sixth grade spelling test.
- Shawna, a kindergarten student, asks whomever is sitting next to her in the cafeteria to open her milk.
- The twelfth grade Economics class is studying the world monetary system and Juan's friend highlights the textbook for him.

Examples of adult support:

- The classroom assistant records what Christopher says during journal writing time.
- A speech pathologist joins Maria in the cafeteria to help her teach the other high school students how to use her communication board.
- The occupational therapist attends Physical Education classes with Nancy and assists her during volleyball and aerobics.
- The third grade teacher gives Lenny a secret cue when he begins to speak too loudly.
- The librarian provides support to Luther and two other tenth grade students as they work in the town library after school.

In Scott's sixth grade class, all students are expected to write, illustrate, and publish books for the school library. Scott has wonderful ideas for stories, but has difficulty writing sentences and drawing pictures. At first, Scott's team decided that he could listen to his classmates' stories instead of writing his own. But one of his friends said, "That's not fair. He should be able to write a book, too." The team reconvened. They agreed that Scott could cut out magazine pictures for his illustrations, and that he could dictate a story to his friend who would write it down. They also agreed to develop a computer writing program so that Scott could learn to write on his own. Scott published eight books that year!

Another way to answer Question 2 is by looking at the ways in which materials can be modified so that the student can fully participate in the lesson. It is important to be sure that all materials used and all modifications made are age-appropriate. Also, remember that the *regular* classroom curriculum and activities are the starting point whenever adapting materials.

There are three ways to change the materials being used:

- the *addition* of materials
- the *adaptation* of materials
- the *substitution* of materials

As clearly illustrated on Chart 4, in most instances, the addition and/or adaptation of materials is preferable to the substitution of materials.

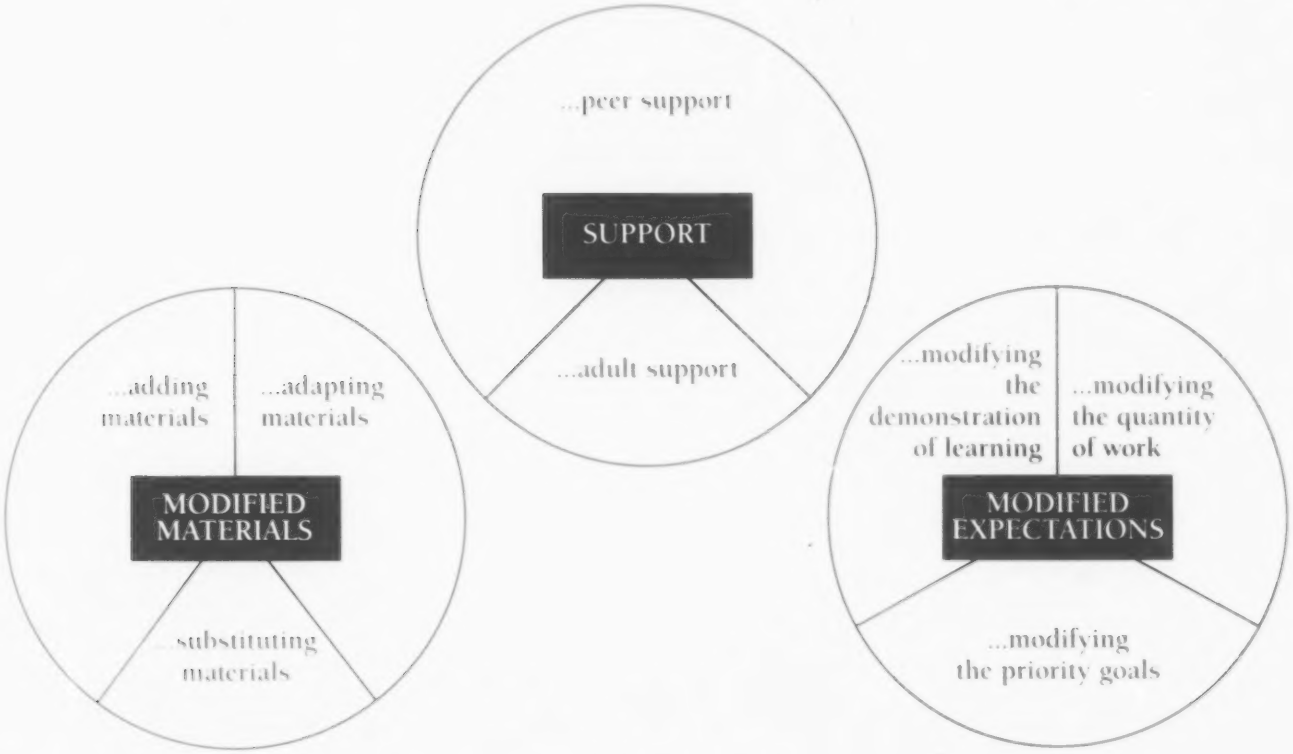
Chart 4

Curriculum Modification and Student Supports

1. Can the student participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students?

If *YES* — stop here — If NO — go on to question #2

2. Which of the following supports and/or modifications (one or more) are necessary for the student's full participation in this lesson?



- Does the student have all of the ***necessary supports*** (e.g. technology, medical)?
- Does the student have a way to ***communicate all day long?***
- Are all modifications and materials ***age-appropriate?***
- Are modifications made taking into consideration the concept of ***comparable challenge?***
- Does the student have opportunities to ***give as well as receive*** support?
- Are all modifications made keeping in mind the ***highest expectations?***
- Has the student been given all of the necessary instructional opportunities to gain ***core skills*** (reading, math, and writing)?

The addition of materials

Additional materials can be combined with existing materials to better enable the student to be actively involved with the lesson. The student still receives the same materials as his or her classmates, but receives additional materials as well. For example, a student solving subtraction problems in a math textbook might need the addition of math manipulatives. The student still uses the same math book and works on the same math problems, but has the assistance of additional materials to complete the work. In most cases, any additional materials provided for a student can be found in that student's classroom.

Examples:

- All students in Stacy's eighth grade English class receive a copy of *The Scarlet Letter*. Stacy also receives a cassette tape of the book.
- Randy is assigned the same problems as the other students in his Business Math class, but is given a calculator to assist him in doing the work.
- Stephanie is responsible for learning all of the second grade spelling words each week. In addition to the list, her teacher gives her index cards with one spelling word printed on each to help her study.
- Jo's lines in the eleventh grade play are recorded by a friend. During the performance, Jo activates a switch to say his lines at the appropriate time.

- Like other kindergarten students, Jean must put her name on all of her work. Rather than write it, she stamps her name on each paper, with help from a classmate.

The adaptation of materials

Existing materials can also be adapted. Teams might decide to alter the materials being used to ensure that learning is meaningful. Using the same math example, a team might change the directions of the math assignment and tell a student to add together the digits on the page rather than subtract them. The student is given the same materials as everyone else, but is asked to do something slightly different with them.

Examples:

- All written materials are enlarged on the photocopier for Peter, a ninth grade student.
- When reading assignments are given, the teacher highlights key points in the text for Sharon, a fifth grade student.
- The directions on the first grade worksheet ask students to match each letter to the picture that starts with that sound. Albert's teacher has changed the directions on his paper to read, "Circle all of the letters that are found in your name."
- Eddie, who has physical disabilities, participates in skiing with adapted poles.

The substitution of materials

A third option involves replacing the curriculum materials with other materials. The replacement materials are part of the regular classroom, but are not what most students are using to complete the assignment. For example, the teacher might assign a different page in the math book for the student, or even give him or her a different worksheet to complete. However, materials native to a special education curriculum (e.g., hand washing skills, safety word flashcards) should not be substituted for the regular math assignment. Instead, regular curriculum, age-appropriate, challenging materials should be used. Obviously, the addition or adaptation of materials should precede the substitution of materials, though this option, used sparingly, can be part of the successful education of a student with disabilities.

Examples:

- The ninth grade class is taking an algebra test. The teacher gives Denise a test with subtraction problems.
- The seventh graders are writing poems and illustrating them. Anthony uses magazine pictures instead of drawing.
- Fourth grade students are given a worksheet to identify the parts of a plant. Pam uses a real plant to identify the stem, petals, and leaves.
- Students in second grade are assigned a page in their math workbooks. Jeff uses math manipulatives to work on his math goals.

the presence of a disability does not supersede the presence of gifts and abilities

Shannon is in fourth grade. At this time she does not yet read. Everyday after lunch, the classroom teacher asks all children to choose a book and read silently someplace in the room. Shannon joins her friends sitting on the rug and listens to a friend read aloud. For most students in the classroom, the purpose of this activity is to practice reading skills and to enjoy books. For Shannon, the purpose of this activity is slightly different. Like her classmates, she is enjoying books, but instead of reading skills, Shannon works on gross motor goals related to sitting independently. She is a part of the regular class activity, but working on different goals.

As with the preceding two categories, modifying the expectations for students is a natural instinct of most teachers. Actually, all of the modification and support suggestions discussed thus far are simply extensions of what teachers do daily in their classrooms — provide support and guidance, alter materials and assignments, and adapt expectations and requirements. This last category is focused on classroom expectations. Expectations can be modified in three ways:

- modification of *quantity*
- modification of the *demonstration of learning*
- modification of *priority goals*

Modification of quantity

One way to modify the expectations of a particular lesson is to change the quantity of work expected from a student. A teacher may decide to give a student more or less work to do than what is expected of most other students in the class. While there may be a tendency to think only of assigning less work to students with disabilities, it is critical to also consider assigning students additional work to do — more work than what most students are doing. Remember, the presence of a disability does not supersede the presence of gifts and abilities.

Examples:

- Rather than read independently for the full 30 minutes of sixth grade silent reading, Andre spends 20 minutes looking at a book and then is read to by a friend for the last 10 minutes.
- Rather than write a 10-page research paper, Georgia writes a three-page research paper.
- Jose is assigned six books to read a month. The rest of the class is assigned four.

Modification of the demonstration of learning

Another way to modify expectations is to modify the ways in which a student demonstrates knowledge and learning. Typically, students demonstrate learning by taking written tests, writing reports, preparing projects, or composing portfolios of their work. Regardless of the method that teachers request, teams can change the way a specific student demonstrates learning. All students do not learn in the same way; therefore it would be unwise to expect them to provide evidence of learning in the same way.

Examples:

- Instead of a written report, Jesse, a fourth grader, makes a diorama about the country he has studied.
- Ben creates a photo exhibit of family pictures rather than write an autobiography in eleventh grade sociology.
- When the kindergarten teacher names the color, Kim points to the color named, rather than saying it aloud.
- Rather than a written scientific description of each experiment in her journal, Asha is responsible for taking instant photographs of each step of the ninth grade class experiments.

Modification of priority goals

Finally, a lesson can be modified by changing the priority goals on which the student is working. It is quite possible and very natural for people to do the same thing but expect slightly different outcomes. For example, one person may go to the beach to work on building a sand castle, another person might go to work on a tan, but both people go to the beach. It is possible that the person trying to get tan will spend part of his or her time building a sand castle, and probably the person building the sand castle will become tan, but the priority for being at the beach is different for each person. The same thing can happen in the classroom.

There are many components of a single lesson, and often students who are learning together can be working on different goals. Although many of the outcomes for students involved in an activity will be the same, it is sometimes helpful for teachers to identify the *most* important goal for a specific student in a specific activity. The term "priority goal" is used. For example, a student who needs to practice communicating with peers may be working in the school store. All students benefit from the experience of working together as a team, making decisions, and being held responsible for a relatively large amount of money. For many of the students, the priority goal of this activity is to learn about financial profits and losses. However, for one student, the priority goal might be different — the goal might be to practice communicating with peers as they come to the store to purchase something. All students are involved in the same activity, all students benefit from the overall experience, but students may be working on different priority goals.

Priority goals can be varied, but a few specific goal areas are worthy of mention. Communication, motor, and social skills are often areas of need — and ultimately areas of focus — for many students with disabilities. Nearly every activity has built into it a component requiring the use of communication skills, motor skills, and/or social skills. As in the classroom store example, the content of what students are learning may be academic in nature (profits and losses), but all students are using communication, motor, and social skills throughout the activity. It is wise to take advantage of opportunities to teach these important skills as it makes sense for students to learn skills in natural settings.

A strong word of caution is important here. Although students with disabilities may be involved in a lesson and working primarily on motor skills, for example, the regular curriculum goals *should not be ignored*. The content of the regular curriculum is important for all students, and too often it is incorrectly assumed that students with disabilities "aren't getting anything out of it." It cannot be assumed that someone is not benefiting from an experience. Shifting the priority goal for a student during a specific activity can create the potential for rich learning, but it is essential not to hold a focus so narrow that the priority goal becomes the only goal.

Examples:

- In first grade, Ann-Marie cuts four different kinds of butterflies out of paper. She certainly is learning about butterflies, but the priority goal is using scissors.
- Giovanni works with his tenth grade cooperative learning group to predict the outcome of the Presidential election. He is responsible for interviewing five people. While it is important for Giovanni to learn about the election process, the priority goal is communication skills.
- Josh's fifth grade class has a spelling bee on Fridays. Although he is responsible for learning several spelling words, the priority goals are standing independently in line and waiting his turn.

Chapter Six

ADDRESSING UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL GOALS

EXPANDING CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL ROUTINES

Students learn skills in the environments where they need to use them. It makes such good sense that teachers wonder why real-life skills were ever taught in simulated settings.

It doesn't take long for teachers to feel comfortable including students with disabilities into the regular lessons and activities of their classrooms. Although making modifications to the regular curriculum can require time and energy (especially when just getting started) the process often becomes less demanding as team members learn how to best adapt and expand a curriculum that is based upon individual student goals. Eventually the question "What can this student do in my classroom?" is heard less often and the teachers who initially asked it are now answering the question for others. But for many of these teachers, a new question arises: "By including a student in all lessons and activities, am I teaching him or her everything he or she needs to learn?"

Consider Sophia, a third grade teacher. She remembers, "When Alex first came into my class I was pretty scared. I had never taught a student with severe disabilities, and I couldn't imagine what Alex would do during the day. I remember worrying about reading time. My students read silently for 20 minutes everyday. I didn't know how Alex could be included in this lesson because he didn't know how to read yet. Now, I realize it's so easy! Alex pairs up with a partner who reads to him, or he listens to books on tape. But I'm beginning to wonder. I know I am including Alex in the silent reading lesson, but am I teaching him to be a better reader?"

Good teachers want all of their students to be as successful as possible and Sophia's question reflects this commitment. She is not only concerned with the student's level of participation, but is equally concerned about the quality of instruction he receives. She wants Alex to be a part of reading, and she wants Alex to learn to read. Of course, Sophia will teach Alex the skills he needs during reading class, but she also wants to know when, where, and how Alex can further develop his reading skills in her classroom.

Sometimes, the learning priorities for a student with disabilities include goals that are not typically addressed in the regular curriculum. IEPs often list goals in subject areas that are not a part of the regular classroom schedule. For example, a team may decide that it is important for a middle school student to learn how to get dressed and undressed independently. Not many regular classes have "dressing time" on their agendas. Teachers do not want to send students out of their classes to work on life skills, but are also wary of overlooking this aspect of the student's education.

In both examples, teachers need to know how skills that are not typically taught in the classroom can be incorporated into the regular curriculum and daily routines. It is possible that the learning priorities for all students with disabilities can be worked on in the context of the regular classroom and school settings. In addition to the instruction and support provided during a student's school career, intensive instruction in priority goals can be provided

once the student has completed his or her senior year in high school. Two strategies follow for teaching "unique" goals in regular places:

- *take advantage of* natural opportunities
- *expand* natural opportunities

Take advantage of natural opportunities

Although dressing skills are not taught during a typical middle school day, there are times during the day when all students use these skills. When coming into school in the morning, students take off their coats, hats, and boots. Getting ready for Physical Education classes means that students change their clothing and/or shoes. Aprons and smocks are donned for Art and Home Economics classes. All of these are natural opportunities to work on goals related to dressing. Most middle school students do not need to learn these skills, but for those who do, there are times during the day when these skills can be addressed.

Students who need more intensive instruction can be supported at home. Related service providers, educators, and paraprofessionals can provide instruction and support to students before or after school in their home or in other typical environments. It is important that this instruction occur only during the times when school is not in session — students should not be pulled away from school to engage in these activities.

Teaching skills in naturally occurring situations affords students many benefits. Students learn skills in the environments where they need to use them, and students are able to model their peers who are well-versed in using these skills. It makes such good sense that teachers wonder why real-life skills were ever taught in simulated settings.

For example, students who may need practice using money can take advantage of opportunities in the cafeteria, the school store, and any school fund-raising activities that might take place. Students who need to work on fine motor skills with the support of an occupational therapist can do so in art classes, writing workshops, and during "hands-on" science experiments. Cooking skills can be practiced during Home Economics class. The playground and the gymnasium are great places for a physical therapist to teach gross-motor skills, and Music class lends itself to practicing listening skills.

Expand natural opportunities

In some instances, naturally existing opportunities for meaningful learning need to be expanded or adapted. Think back to Alex and his third grade teacher, Sophia. Alex is successfully included in the daily silent reading lesson, but Sophia wants to be sure he also has the opportunity to learn to read. If she works with Alex on beginning reading skills during the silent reading lesson, Alex might feel awkward, and he will miss out on the purpose of this lesson for all students — to read and enjoy books for pleasure. Instead, Sophia will look for times during the third grade day when Alex can work on beginning reading skills in meaningful contexts.

Some of the students in this third grade class buy milk at snack time. Usually Sophia reads off the list of names and marks down who is buying milk. Instead of the teacher reading the list, Sophia determines that Alex could read the list each morning to get some practice reading the names of his classmates. The opportunity to read the milk list has always existed. Sophia is simply expanding a naturally occurring opportunity for the sake of good education. Sophia also identifies many other times during the day for Alex to develop and practice his reading skills.

The most important question to ask when working to find creative solutions to support issues is, "How would this situation be handled if the student did **not** *have a disability?"*

In addition to the occasional need to learn material not typically covered in the regular curriculum, students with disabilities sometimes bring unique support needs (behavioral, medical, emotional) into the classroom. Teachers often report that, although they are comfortable with modifying the curriculum for a particular student, these other issues can interfere with the student's full inclusion in a particular lesson.

For example, questions sometimes arise when students with complex medical needs are included in regular classrooms. Regular education schedules are often quite structured and do not include time for taking care of medically-related needs. For some students, medical needs may be as simple as needing to use a particular piece of adapted equipment (a prone stander, for example) for a part of everyday. For others, medical needs are more complex and require the assistance of the school nurse. Therefore, teams want and need to know how to fully include students *and* support their medical needs in the context of the regular classroom schedule.

The most important question to ask when working to find creative solutions to support issues is, "How would this situation be handled if the student did *not* have a disability?" Ask any teacher — behavior, medical, and emotional issues are certainly not unique to students with disabilities. A student's disability should never be ignored, but it is important for teams to think beyond special education. It is far too easy for all of a student's characteristics to be tied to the student's disability.

The same two steps used for teaching unique educational goals can be used for supporting unique behavioral, emotional, or medical needs:

- *take advantage of* natural opportunities
- *expand* natural opportunities.

Take advantage of natural opportunities

Ginny will be in second grade next year. Her team met over the summer to discuss the kinds of supports she will need in the regular classroom. Many issues were discussed, and eventually the conversation landed on the topic of using the bathroom. The team brainstormed ideas about how Ginny would indicate that she had to use the bathroom. The special education teacher recommended that someone bring Ginny to the bathroom every hour. The speech pathologist suggested Ginny learn to tell someone when she needs to use the bathroom. The occupational therapist offered to make a graph of when Ginny uses the bathroom to identify a pattern. Finally, the second grade teacher, who had remained quiet during the meeting thus far, spoke up. She said, "This may sound crazy, but what if Ginny just took the bathroom pass to the bathroom whenever she needed to go? That's what the rest of the class does." The team members all looked at one another and then broke into nervous laughter. Of course, the second grade teacher was right!

Ginny's story is a good example of how teams can take advantage of natural opportunities to support a student's unique needs. Clearly, the team had already determined that Ginny needed some sort of consistent system for letting her teacher know when she wanted to use the bathroom. Fortunately, a system already existed, and the team needed only to recognize it. Supporting student needs by taking advantage of existing school or classroom routines is at the core of inclusive education. In the past, new systems, plans, routines, and activities were created in an effort to provide support to students with disabilities. Today the only piece that is "new" is the perspective of teams who are learning to look at situations and solutions differently.

As with Ginny's team, care must be taken to avoid creating overly special supports for students with disabilities when typical supports are already in place and can be used effectively. In the past, when a student with disabilities needed medical, emotional, or behavioral support, that student was sent to the special education classroom. That is no longer an option. Instead, teams need to figure out ways to support students that rely solely on regular school environments (e.g., the regular classroom, the library, the guidance counselor's office, the nurse's office).

To further illustrate this issue, another example is provided.

A seventh grader named Brad is in an English class and the teacher is quite skilled at making modifications for him. However, it seems that everyday, about 10 minutes before the bell rings, Brad's behavior becomes disruptive. If this issue goes unresolved, Brad, his teacher, and his classmates stand to have a difficult year.

Assuming that appropriate modifications and adequate supports are being provided during the lesson, the focus for Brad's team becomes the issue of Brad's behavior. If the team determines that, as with any other student who is disruptive, Brad must go see the school principal, then this should occur. However, if the team determines that, like any other student who has a *pattern* of behavior, Brad's behavior is communicating something, then necessary support should be provided. The team needs to determine what kind of behavioral support can be provided for Brad to better enable him to be successful for the last 10 minutes of his English class.

Brad's team can take advantage of natural opportunities to provide support during English class. There are many possible reasons behind Brad's behavior, but assume for a minute the team discovers that Brad has difficulty finding his study hall, the room he goes to after English. Because of this, he gets quite nervous toward the end of the English period, and speaks out loudly, disrupting others. When the reason for his behavior is realized, a solution can follow. Brad's team first recognizes that he needs more support going from English class to study hall and then realizes that the support is readily available — the team finds a student who takes these classes with Brad, and then arranges for that student and Brad to walk together to study hall. Nothing special has to be created. The other student naturally goes from English class to study hall and Brad's team just takes advantage of that.

Expand natural opportunities

In other situations, natural opportunities exist but need to be adapted or expanded in order to provide for meaningful learning. Students may need more support than can be provided through a typical routine or activity, but by changing the activity slightly, adequate support is provided. For example:

Stan is a young student who works with his classmates on reading and writing activities each morning. Regardless of the fact that Stan's team consistently makes meaningful modifications to his morning work, he has a great deal of difficulty staying in his seat while working. His teacher is concerned because Stan does not complete his work when he is roaming around the room, and this behavior interrupts the other children.

As the achievements of the past five years illustrate, the development of truly inclusive education for students of all ages is becoming a reality, as students move From Special to Regular, From Ordinary to Extraordinary.

The team supporting Stan agrees that one of Stan's needs is to get up and move once in a while. They realize that sitting quietly throughout the language arts period is very difficult for him at this time. Of course they want to continue to teach Stan to increase his ability to stay in his seat, but they also want to support him to be successful now. At first they look for a natural opportunity to provide Stan with time to move freely. They realize that all students get out of their seats to sharpen their pencils, throw something away, or to ask the teacher a question. The team works with Stan to get out of his seat only at these times, but three weeks later, finds that it isn't enough. Stan still seems to need a break during the morning work period. At this point, the team chooses to expand a natural opportunity.

Everyone in Stan's class has a job. Each day it is someone's job to go to the cafeteria to get the milk at snack time. Walking to and from the cafeteria to get the milk would provide Stan with the break he needs, but according to the class schedule, he is assigned this job just ten times during the year. The team decides to expand the natural opportunity and make "snack milk" a two-person job. Stan will always be one of the two people. The team has worked out a solution that works for everyone. Stan gets a break, his classmates do not get interrupted, and Stan returns from the cafeteria ready to work. The team recognized a natural opportunity (picking up the snack milk) and expanded it (redesigned it to be a two-person job) to meet Stan's support needs.

There are ample opportunities to take advantage of during the school day when planning supports for a student. Classroom and school routines such as creating bulletin boards, tutoring younger students, working in the school store, being a hall monitor, and washing the chalkboards all provide teams with naturally occurring opportunities for students with unique support needs. Teams should never rely on special routines and activities. That's the great thing about regular education — it's rich with opportunities.

Conclusion

Schools and communities throughout the country have made great strides in the development of systems and strategies that support inclusive education. The examples and strategies in this book illustrate the strength and commitment of New Hampshire families, students, and schools. This strength and commitment has brought about many positive changes in our state; however, additional work remains to be done. While most students in elementary and middle schools have benefited from well-established inclusive education philosophies and practices, far too many high school students continue to be educated apart from their peers. The challenge for the coming years, in New Hampshire as well as throughout the country, is to establish inclusive education as a practice for *all* students, from preschool through post-secondary education.

Surprisingly, one of the greatest barriers to full inclusion at the high school level comes from some of the proponents of inclusive education. Many professionals in the field continue to support the practice of high school — and even middle school — students with disabilities leaving the school building during the school day to participate in separate community based instruction. This practice erects barriers to full academic and social inclusion, and gives mixed messages to students and communities alike. While many schools involved in the restructuring movement are embracing educational experiences in the community for all students (for example, community-service requirements, internships, and apprenticeships), most schools have not yet implemented this practice. Therefore, the practice of separate community-based instruction during the school day only for students with disabilities continues to be exclusive.

Another potential barrier to full inclusion at the high school level is a school's interpretation of federal "transition" legislation. Although many schools throughout New Hampshire are working to combine these mandates with their established or emerging practices in inclusive education, the challenge is obvious. Great care must be taken to avoid the development of a new and separate system of "transition" for students with disabilities. History must guide us. Families and schools today are engaged in a great effort to dismantle the separate educational system that was created for students with disabilities. If "transition" for students with disabilities is viewed separately from "transition" — or graduation — for students without disabilities, a new separate system may someday need to be undone.

A third issue affecting the development of fully inclusive high schools is the way in which students over the age of 18 are supported. If students are to be fully included in all typical high school experiences through the completion of their senior year, schools must then provide "post-graduate" support to these young adults in the community — not in high school. The old practice of keeping students with disabilities in the high school building long after their same age peers have gone, does not support the values of full inclusion. Therefore, there must be a re-conceptualization of the supports and experiences for young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 to ensure full inclusion and participation in the community, work, recreation, and post-secondary education.

To support these efforts, it is essential that colleges and universities closely evaluate the ways in which teachers are educated. New leaders who understand the principles of heterogeneous classrooms, student and family diversity, and inclusion must emerge from the institutions of higher education.

While there are certainly challenges to the creation of policy and practices to support full inclusion at all levels, families, students, and schools are quickly taking the lead in responding to these issues. As the achievements of the past five years illustrate, the development of truly inclusive education for students of all ages is becoming a reality, as students move *From Special to Regular, From Ordinary to Extraordinary*.

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Lastly, our deep appreciation to all of the families, students, and educators in New Hampshire who have paved the way for others to move *From Special to Regular, From Ordinary to Extraordinary*.

Appendix

The following materials have proven to be useful in our quest to achieve inclusive schools and communities in New Hampshire. We recommend these materials to further the reader's knowledge of the many topics addressed in this book.

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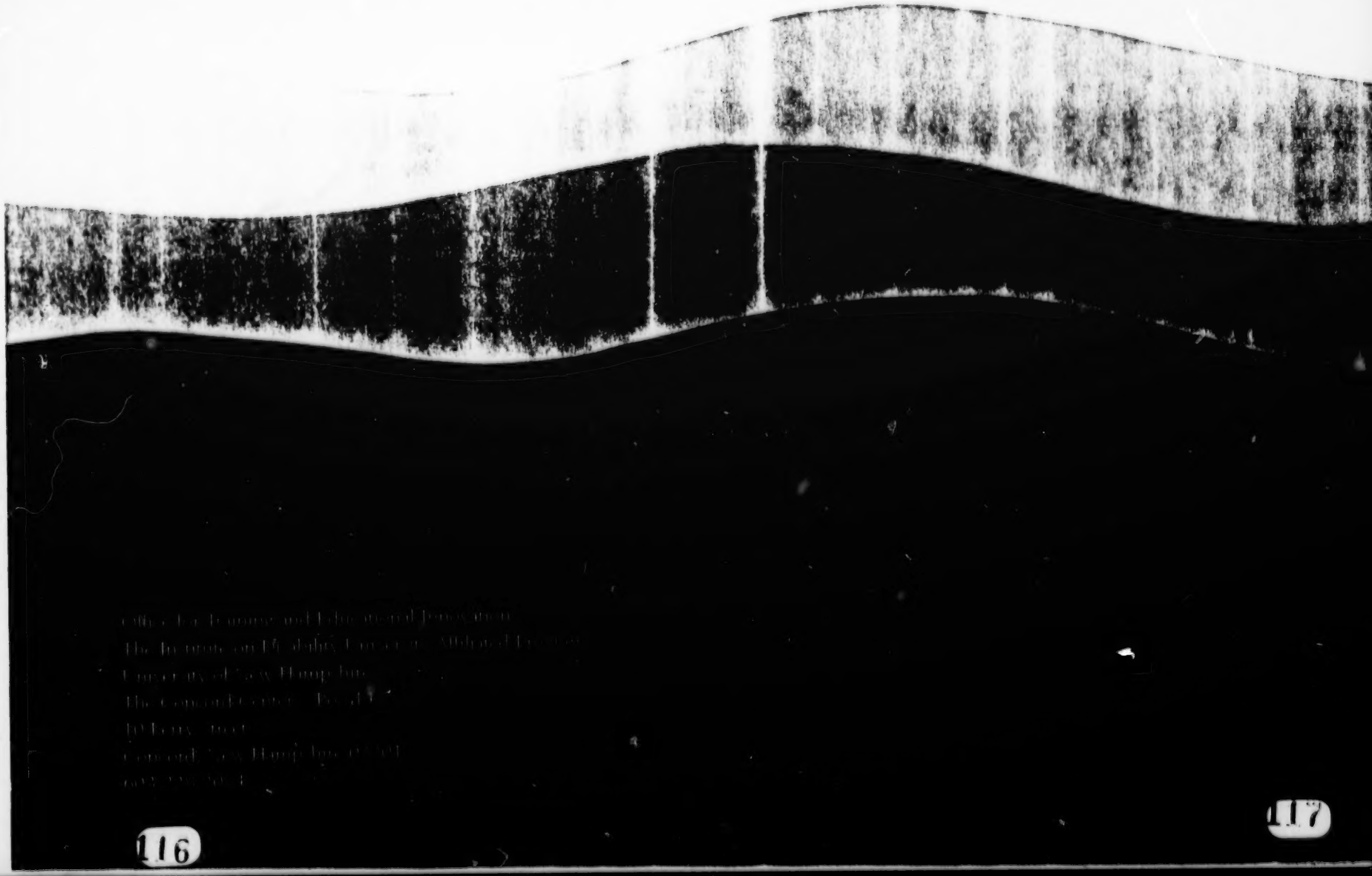

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